



THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES

A WEEKLY PUBLICATION
DEVOTED TO BORDER HISTORY

Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at New York Post Office by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.

No. 57.

Price, Five Cents.

BUFFALO BILL AND THE SURGEON SCOUT

OR
THE BRAVE DUMB MESSENGER



BY THE AUTHOR OF
"BUFFALO BILL"

BUFFALO BILL DEALT THE OUTLAW CHIEF A BLOW THAT MADE HIM REEL FROM HIS SADDLE, JUST AS SURGEON POWELL GRASPEY
THE REIN OF HIS HORSE.



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Buffalo Bill and the Surgeon Scout;

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CHAPTER I.

A PARD IN DANGER.

It was long after dark, but the horseman who was moving rapidly in the direction of the Little Colorado River knew that it was often safest to travel by night. Buffalo Bill—for it was the great scout who was spurring his horse across the plain—had no wish to meet with any bands of marauding Indians. He had just returned from a lone journey into Death Valley and had barely escaped from it with his life. No man had ever entered Death Valley and returned before Buffalo Bill had ridden into it.

Although beautiful and fertile, it was shunned even by the Indians, and was shut off from the rest of the world by a desert which Buffalo Bill had crossed.

The scout had found that there were people living in Death Valley and that it was their custom to put all intruders to death. He himself had been captured and chained in a cave expecting to be put to death.

He was freed, however, and guided out of the valley by a mysterious woman, who lived there.

Who she was or how she had come there Buffalo Bill did not know. He called her his "Mascot" and promised her, at her request, not to return to Death Valley until six months had elapsed.

And now he was hurrying to the nearest fort to report his strange adventures to the commandant there when he espied a glimmer of light through the darkness. He knew that it came from a camp upon the Little Colorado River.

Losing sight of the light almost immediately, he halted and began to investigate. It might be a couple of his scouts, or a scouting party of cavalry, but most likely it was a band of redskins.

"The chances are ten to one that it is a band of redskins," he muttered.

As he no longer saw the light of the campfire, he rode back to where it had first caught his eye, and soon got a glimpse of it again.

Turning his glass upon it, he managed to make out that it was over a mile away, and was a campfire in a small canyon, where the light would not be visible except from the position he was then in.

Riding slowly forward, the scout guided his way by keeping the campfire in sight.

After riding for some distance, he halted again and investigated with his field glass.

He saw several forms moving to and fro, and said:

"Indians!"

Then he dismounted and staked his horse out to feed, while he cautiously went forward on foot.

Drawing nearer, he saw that the camp was across the river, in a small canyon of the hill country on the other side.

There was timber there, and some meadow land, and the scout thought that he saw some horses feeding upon the latter.

As he looked he saw an Indian's form plainly defined between him and the firelight.

Confident that there were a number of them there, and with his horse and himself well worn out, he concluded to simply reconnoiter sufficiently to see what their force was and then go on to the fort and report the fact.

To do this he must approach much nearer.

As the camp was on the other side of the stream he was in no immediate danger of running upon them, and yet the scout was most cautious in his approach.

At last he gained a position among a clump of cottonwood trees and not three hundred yards from the campfire.

It was built up in a canyon, and there were some half-dozen of Indians about it eating their supper.

That there was a guard over their ponies feeding upon the meadow, of a couple or more braves the scout was satisfied, while upon the hill above the camp there would naturally be a sentinel on duty.

"About ten all told," muttered the scout, and he leveled his glass upon the camp to take a deliberate survey of it and its surroundings.

Hardly had he gazed half a minute through the field-glass when he uttered an exclamation of surprise, which ended in a muttered imprecation.

This was caused by a discovery which he had made, and it was one that seemed to move him more than his own danger in the Valley of Death had done.

What he saw was a white man seated by the little campfire, and that he was a prisoner was certain as his hands were bound behind him, and more, the scout recognized the man who was in the power of the redskins.

The little fire in the canyon was bright enough to

reveal all near it with distinctness, and Buffalo Bill had a good view through his field-glass of the Indians and their prisoner.

This prisoner was a man clad in fatigue uniform, upon his shoulders being the straps of an officer, and upon his head he wore a black army helmet with a sable plume.

He was seated upon a stone, and both his feet and hands were securely bound.

The prisoner, though an army officer, wore his hair long, as it fell in thick waves below his shoulders.

The scout, having discovered that the Indians had a paleface prisoner, was not long in making up his mind as to just what he would do.

That the redskins would encamp there for the night he was assured, and so he decided to make a flank movement, gaining the hill country across the stream and approaching the camp from the overhanging cliffs.

He knew that there was a ford some miles below, and a trail leading over the hills, so he took another careful survey of the surroundings and then went back to his horse.

Mounting, he turned off down the stream, pressing his horse into a canter, and after going several miles came to a ford made by wild animals in crossing and recrossing the stream.

He filled his canteen, gave his horse a refreshing draught of water, and then pushed on into the hill in an oblique way, making his own trail.

Again it was a ride of several miles, and he found himself half a mile from the river and just in the rear of the canyon where the Indians were encamped.

He staked his horse out and took from his saddle a small bugle, hanging it about his neck by the cord.

Then he set out cautiously to approach the Indian camp.

His knowledge of the Indian nature told him that they had a sentinel in the hills over the camp, and his first duty was to find that redskin.

If he could surprise him the chances were that he could reach the camp, and spread panic among the Indians, but if the sentinel detected him first he might have to act on the defensive and ruin all chances of rescuing the prisoner, for that was his firm resolve.

So, with the noiseless manner of a panther approaching his prey, and the patience of an Indian, he began to creep upon the position where he expected to find the sentinel.

He saw just the faintest glimmer of a firelight against the top of the cliff and then moved about until he caught sight of the redskin he was looking for.

The Indian sentinel was standing with his back to a small quaking-asp tree, and his face was toward the

camp, as though he longed to be down there with his comrades.

Buffalo Bill knew, as he took in the situation, that the chances of surprising the redskin by getting up to him were slim.

But he must make the attempt at least, and if discovered, then he would have to shoot him and trust to his bugle to give the others a belief that they were surprised by cavalry.

By a rapid fire down upon them from the cliff overhanging the camp, he might be able to put them to flight and cause them to desert their prisoner to save themselves.

This was his plan if he failed to get up close to the Indian sentinel and grapple with him.

Could he do this then he trusted to his own strength to get away with the redskin without allowing him to give an alarm to his comrades.

Having discovered the Indian's position the scout moved forward with a caution born of long experience upon the frontier, and the grim determination that no life should stand between him and the rescue of his best friend, for the one who was a prisoner in the hands of the Indians he had recognized as his pard of many a trail, one whose life he had before saved, one to whom he owed it time and again that he had not been killed, a man among men, Frank Powell, the Surgeon Scout. How Frank Powell, the Surgeon Scout, had fallen into the hands of the Indians Buffalo Bill could not understand, for few men were his equal as a trailer and borderman, and none possessed greater pluck and indomitable nerve.

But there he was, the surgeon of the fort, a prisoner bound hands and feet, and what his fate would be, could his captors get him to their village, was very readily understood.

But he must be rescued and thus saved, and to do this Buffalo Bill was not a man to count odds.

His own life he would gladly risk to save any one, and how much more would he chance to save his pard, the Surgeon Scout!

So he moved toward the Indian sentinel step by step.

So slowly did he go that he hardly progressed a couple of steps in a minute.

He did not raise his feet from the ground, for fear of putting them down upon a dry twig that would break and betray him.

Were it a white man on duty, the scout would have expected him to soon change his position.

But an Indian will sit, or stand, perfectly still in one position for a long while, and the sentinel might not move for an hour.

But Buffalo Bill did not take chances, and his rifle

was ready and cocked, to drop the Indian the instant he should discover him.

Nearer and nearer he drew, and the redskin still remained like a statue.

He leaned against the quaking-asp and his back was toward the scout.

If danger came to the camp it was expected from that direction, yet the Indian did not appear to dread the presence of any foe near, and watched the cheery reflection of the fire against the cliff rather than the hill land behind him where death was lurking for him.

Nearer and nearer the scout approached the Indian until he had to suppress his breathing for fear it would be heard by the keen ear of the savage.

At last but ten feet only parted him from the redskin, and the scout halted.

He had no fear of himself, for his dread was only that he might not prevent the alarm being given before he could get his clutch upon the throat of the sentinel.

If he had to shoot him that meant an alarm that might destroy his chances of rescuing the Surgeon Scout.

There was a slight unevenness in the ground between the scout and the Indian, and there was a chance that the little hollow was deeper than it looked and a fall would betray all.

But the scout continued his noiseless, sliding movement with his feet, down the slight declivity and up the other side, until he stood within almost arm's reach of his foe.

The Indian still stood with his back to the tree, and now the scout discovered that the chin rested upon his breast, that the head was bent forward, and the redskin was fast asleep on duty.

Buffalo Bill gave a sigh of relief, gently stooped and laid down his rifle, and then, in an instant more his iron grip was upon the throat of the sleeping red sentinel.

There was a hoarse gurgle, as a cry was stifled, then began a fight for life.

The Indian was a large, powerfully-built man, but the scout's hold upon his throat was one he could not shake off, and it was crushing the life out of him.

The redskin at once had grasped his knife, and the scout's other hand had gripped his wrist with iron force.

The struggle, if long, would surely attract attention Buffalo Bill well knew, and he at once determined to end the fight as soon as possible, so he thrust his enemy backward, tripped him and he fell upon his back in the little ditch spoken of.

The scout fell on top of him, but was compelled to release the wrist of the Indian in the fall.

Instantly the body of the Indian relaxed, and Buffalo Bill was not long in discovering the cause, for the redskin had fallen upon his own knife, as he put his hand behind him to break his fall, and the long blade had pierced his heart.

Buffalo Bill arose to his feet in silence, and stood gazing down upon his dead foe, while he felt a thrill of triumph at having the barrier on the cliff in the rescue of the Surgeon Scout at least out of the way.

The tension to which the scout's every nerve had been drawn, and the tax upon his strength in the death struggle, had told upon even his splendid physique, and it was several minutes before he could regain full control of himself.

At last he was successful, his muscles ceased to twitch, his nerves to quiver, and he was once more his calm self, ready for any emergency.

He knew that it must be midnight, and that a sentinel would come to relieve the one on the cliff, the one who was off duty forever, so that he must be on the watch.

To be upon the safe side, he took the Indian's head-dress and put it on, wrapping his blanket about him, and so approached the cliff.

Did a relief guard come up, by some path known to the Indians, thus seeing him rigged out, he would naturally suppose that it was his comrade, and feel no fear of him.

Approaching the cliff, the scout glanced over cautiously, and looked down into the little canyon.

The fire was burning low, but there was light enough to count seven forms about it, wrapped in blankets, excepting one.

That one was the Surgeon Scout, and he lay upon the ground with nothing beneath him for protection, no covering over him.

An Indian sentinel sat upon a rock near, watching the prisoner, though he was securely bound, but all the others were asleep.

With his glass peering out upon the meadow beyond the mouth of the canyon, Buffalo Bill dimly traced the outlines of the Indian ponies feeding, and knew that there were guards with them.

He had decided to open fire upon the Indian camp by shooting the sentinel seated upon the rock and then drop two or three more as they all sprang to their feet in alarm.

Leaping back, he would then give a bugle call, and that would cause the belief that cavalry were upon them and stampede the band, while from his point of vantage he could protect the Surgeon Scout from any attempt to kill him by picking off any redskin who made the attempt to do so.

Believing themselves hemmed in, attacked by cavalry, the redskins would stampede for their ponies to make their escape with all dispatch, and the scout could remain master of the situation.

It was a clever, bold plot at rescue, and for Buffalo Bill to plan was to carry out to a successful termination in most cases.

When the life of the Surgeon Scout was at stake, Buffalo Bill was the more anxious that there should be no failure of his plot.

He had just decided to act and was rising to his feet to get his rifle and draw a bead upon the sentinel in the canyon, whom he hated to kill without a warning or danger to himself, when he was startled by a word spoken at his side.

In an instant he realized the danger he was in, for it was the Indian sentinel who had come up to relieve the guard on the cliff.

The redskin had seen him lying there and gazing over the cliff into the canyon, so evidently supposed it was his comrade, and asleep.

So he crept forward to give him a fright, when Buffalo Bill arose.

Unfortunately for the Indian, he was within a couple of feet of the edge of the cliff, and when he spoke the scout realized the situation with lightning-like quickness and acted.

His action was to strike the legs of the redskin a terrific blow that knocked them from under him and he went backward over the edge of the cliff, while from his lips broke a wild, thrilling cry of despair, as he knew he was dashing to his death upon the rocks a hundred feet below.

Without waiting to note the effect of the redskin's fall, almost into the camp of his comrades, Buffalo Bill threw his rifle to his shoulder and just as the sentinel on the rock near the prisoner sprang to his feet sent a bullet crashing through his brain.

Springing back, he then placed his little bugle to his lips and sounded a call which rung wildly out on the night air.

Dropping his bugle, he gave his own well-known war-cry and was back at his post upon the cliff ready to protect the Surgeon Scout from any death blow his captors might give him before stampeding in their flight for their ponies.

CHAPTER II.

THE CHASE.

It was well that Buffalo Bill realized that it was necessary for him to protect the prisoner from the frightened savages, for just as he appeared upon the cliff again one of the Indians was about to deal a death-

blow with his tomahawk upon the head of the defenseless Surgeon Scout.

A sharp report and the bullet from the scout's rifle shattered the hand of the savage, while several shots were fired in rapid succession to further increase the fright of the Indians.

They had the desired effect, for, with the dead, the one who had fallen from the cliff writhing in agony but a few paces distant, and one of their comrades with a bullet-shattered hand, the remainder stood not on the order of going but went at once.

They darted out of the canyon, leaving their prisoner and their blankets, with their camping outfit as well.

The scout gave again and again his startling war-cry, known so well upon the frontier, and ran along the cliff top to fire upon the retreating Indians as they rushed for their horses, though he fired at random.

Then he once more gave a bugle call as a further means of startling the braves, and the rapid clatter of hoofs told him that he had been successful, for the Indians rushed madly for the river and the plunging of their ponies into the stream soon reached the ears of Buffalo Bill.

Finding the trail the sentinels had followed to the top of the cliff, Buffalo Bill rapidly bounded down it to the plains below, and, running from point to point with great speed, fired first his rifle, then his revolvers, to let the Indians see the flashes and believe there were a number of men in the attack.

Pressing on down toward the river across the meadow, Buffalo Bill saw two dark forms which he at once knew to be horses left by the redskins in their flight, they not taking time to gather up all of the animals.

Going up to one of the animals, he found by the stake a saddle and bridle and he cried:

"Good! it is the doctor's horse!"

To throw the saddle upon the animal, put the bridle on and mount him was an instant's work, and the scout dashed up to the Indian pony staked near, those two having been apart from the others.

The pony was quickly secured and away went Buffalo Bill at all speed toward the canyon.

There lay the Surgeon Scout securely bound and unable to free himself, but as he saw who his rescuer was, he uttered a war-cry and called out:

"Bravo, Bill! I knew that war-cry of yours when I heard it upon the cliff."

"Come, Doc, there is not a second to lose, for there are eight of those fellows left yet, and they will soon be back when they find they are not pursued, so we must be off, for my horse is a mile from here the way we have to go."

As he spoke he cut the rawhide lariat that bound the

Surgeon Scout so securely and aided him to mount, for the rescued prisoner was benumbed from the bonds that had been drawn so tight.

Throwing a few of the Indians' traps upon the captured pony, Buffalo Bill leaped upon his back and led the way out of the canyon at a gallop.

Along the cliff they rode for a quarter of a mile until they found a trail leading up into the hills which they turned into just as the Indians uttered a series of wild cries and began to cross the river.

"They have been re-enforced, Bill."

"You think so, Doc, but I believe they know they have discovered the weakness of the rescuing party and are coming back to attack us."

"No, for there is no weakness in the rescuing party, Bill, as I have good reason to know. No, they had another band of half a hundred which retreated by the valley trail and were to join them here, for that I heard them arrange."

"You are right, Frank, for there are a large number of horses coming across the stream to make all that noise. We must ride for it now and reach my horse, after which we can dodge them if they do not crowd us too close," and Buffalo Bill led the way to the spot where he had left his horse, the Surgeon Scout following close at his heels and warming up after his having been so long tied and helpless.

Buffalo Bill saw that Surgeon Powell found it no easy task to remain in the saddle.

His feet were almost lifeless from the tight bonds that were upon them, and his hands were in a like condition.

Then, too, with no covering, and lying upon the damp ground, the doctor had become chilled through to the bone.

But the movement of his horse warmed him by degrees, and he was feeling better by the time the scout reached his horse.

Dismounting, Buffalo Bill took the extra weight upon his own and Surgeon Powell's horse, and, with his lariat bound it upon the Indian pony, which was a fine animal and would save the two large horses in the race for life, which both men knew now it must be, as there was one means of escape only, and that along the top of the ridge.

The Indians were heard pressing on, seeming to know the country well and aware of the fact that they had been cleverly outwitted and run off by but one man.

Their yells and the clatter of hoofs told Buffalo Bill that the other band, which Surgeon Powell had said was half a hundred strong, had joined those who had had the prisoner in charge.

The ridge was a rough one, and hard to make good time over, while it ran that way for several miles.

Then came a steep descent to the prairie land beyond, but in descending the scout knew was their danger, as the redskins would be able to fire down upon them at short range.

Could they have gained the prairie far ahead of the Indians they knew that they could have eluded them; but, within sight of the redskins they would be hard pressed.

"I am not able to handle a weapon yet, Bill, so you will have to do the fighting while I help you with the running," said the Surgeon Scout, as they went along as rapidly as the nature of the ground would permit.

"All right, Frank, when we reach the end of the ridge, if they press us, I will let you go ahead with the horses while I give them a check, for I can descend faster on foot."

"No, you will go down with me, for I will not leave you, and besides there are too many of them for you to check even for a minute. Were they but the small force that had me a prisoner we both might make a stand and with success."

"I guess you are right, Frank."

"We must run for it as our only hope."

They pushed steadily on, but were most cautious, as they did not know the pitfalls in their way.

The Surgeon Scout had been over the trail with his captors early in the afternoon, but Buffalo Bill had not been, and the doctor warned him that the way was a dangerous one, full of holes which might throw their horses and cripple them and perhaps hurt the riders seriously.

The Indians evidently were better used to the trail, for they came on more rapidly, and their ponies got over the rough ground with greater ease than did the two large horses of the pards.

So the flight continued until at last the end of the ridge was reached, and the descent began.

It was a ride of a half mile down the hill, in a zig-zag course, and the scouts were but half way down when the Indians appeared upon the trail above.

They saw, by the starlight, the two men going down the hill and with wild yells sent a shower of arrows after them, while they also began to descend, dismounting and leading their ponies.

The arrows flew about the two friends with ominous whirring sound and struck the rocky path with a sound like the pattering of huge drops of rain.

"I'll remind them that we are at least around," said Buffalo Bill, who had reloaded his weapons, and Surgeon Powell added:

"And soon I hope my hands will be able to grasp a weapon."

"Yes, for I brought your rifle and revolvers, which the redskins left in camp when they fled."

As he spoke Buffalo Bill turned in his saddle and sent a dozen shots from his Winchester repeating rifle rattling back up the hill at the savage.

A pony fell, and there were savage cries from the Indians, which told that one at least of the shots had taken effect upon a brave as well as a horse, though fired almost at random.

Then the return fire came, and once more the arrows rattled about the fugitives, while accompanying them were half-a-dozen bullets from those of the Indians who possessed firearms. The two scouts pressed on in silence, after the return fire of the redskins, devoting their every energy to the descent of the dangerous hill.

On came the Indians, all of them leading their ponies, and enabled, by their knowledge of the trail, to cut off here and there a few rods.

At last the level land was reached, the horses were urged into a gallop, and rapidly they drew away from the Indians.

"Had that hill dragged out a couple of hundred yards further, Bill, it would have been a fight to the death."

"It certainly would have been, Doc. But we are all right now."

"Yes, I guess so," and the two horses and Indian pony were pressed on more rapidly.

"The pony does not keep up well, Bill," said Frank Powell, as the Indian horse dragged heavily back upon his lead line.

"No, and for a reason."

"Ah! he is wounded, then?"

"Yes, one of those arrows plugged him."

"Too bad, but we can do without him if he drops out, for the Indians will not follow us far over the prairie."

"No, I think not, and I sincerely hope so, for I got it as well as the pony, Frank."

"You wounded, Bill?" cried the surgeon, in alarm.

"Yes, slightly in my arm, but it is bleeding freely."

"We must look to this as soon as we dare halt."

"We will press on for a while yet, Frank, and I'll stand it unless I feel I am getting weak," coolly said Buffalo Bill.

So on they rode for half a mile further when the Indian pony began to sway badly, and it was decided to halt and take the traps from off his back.

The hands of the Surgeon Scout were now regaining their usefulness, and so he aided in stripping the pony, which went down the moment they halted.

"Bill."

"Yes, Doc."

"They have given up the chase."

CHAPTER III.

THE SURGEON SCOUT'S MISSION.

"You are right," said Buffalo Bill, giving a glance back over the prairie, where the Indians could be seen going toward the ridge once more.

The Surgeon Scout then turned his attention to the wound of Buffalo Bill, tying around the arm his handkerchief to prevent the flow of blood, for it was bleeding freely.

Riding on once more for a couple of miles they came to a timber motte, where there was a spring, and here they halted, the first duty of the surgeon being to look after his wounded comrade.

"I must have a light, Bill, so if we build a fire and they see it, we can get away before they come. The horses will have a rest, water, and a few mouthfuls of grass."

The scout at once set to work at once to build a fire, and the surgeon took from his saddle-pocket the case of instruments, with lint, bandages and arnica that he never went without, and which the Indians had not robbed him of when they captured him.

The scout had a bright fire burning in a few minutes and throwing off his hunting coat he bared his arm for the surgeon to examine the wound.

"The arrow was not poisoned, fortunately, Bill, or there would already have been inflammation. It ran in to the bone, but will not be serious, I think," and the surgeon probed the wound, Buffalo Bill standing the pain without a word.

Then the wound was dressed, bandaged, and in twenty minutes the two were ready to mount and continue on their way.

They were just in time, too, as the Indians from the hill having seen the fire, came to the conclusion that the scouts supposed they had given up the chase, so had gone into camp.

"See there, Frank," said Bill, pointing to a dark mass off on the prairie.

"Yes, they have halted their ponies there, while they are creeping up on us. As we are ready to go now, I'll drop a few shots out upon the prairie, about where I think they are, merely to show them we are not such fools as they take us for."

As the Surgeon Scout spoke he raised his rifle to his shoulder, leveled it at about where he supposed there were redskins creeping toward the little clump of timber, and then he fired half-a-dozen shots in quick succession.

Wild yells answered the shots, and he knew the bullets had hit near, if they had done no damage.

Then the two mounted and dashed out of the timber at a gallop, followed by the wild yells of the foiled savages.

With the short rest they had had the two horses of the scouts went along at a sweeping gallop and kept up a quick pace for half-a-dozen miles, when they came to a stream, the banks of which were heavily fringed with trees.

Crossing at a buffalo trail, the pairs turned up the stream and held on for half an hour, when they came into some hill land where there were wood and water in plenty.

Seeking a camping-place which they both knew well, the friends soon had their horses staked out near, where the grass was plentiful, and then a fire was built and they had supper, for both men were hungry.

They had built a fire in a ravine where it could not be seen a short distance away, and when supper had been disposed of they lay down to rest, very sure that the redskins would not dare follow them beyond the river, if they did that far, for the fort was too near for them to venture with a small force.

The sun was rising when they awoke, and both horses were greatly refreshed by their rest of several hours' sleep and food.

After a hasty breakfast, they continued on their way once more, the surgeon having again dressed Buffalo Bill's wounded arm, which was painful, but not serious, both were glad to discover.

As they rode away over the prairies at a steady pace, for there was no cause of hurry now, Buffalo Bill said:

"Doc, how was it that the reds happened to pick up so sly an old plainsman as you are?"

"I'll tell you, Bill, after I make known to you that you surely saved my life, for those red devils intended taking me to their village and there torturing me to death. But it is getting to be an old story, your saving my life, yet still I thank you, Bill, from the bottom of my heart."

"Don't speak of thanks, Frank, for I understand all that, and honors are easy between us, I guess, for you have saved me from death time and again. Now, how did the redskins catch you?"

"In the simplest way in the world. My horse got away from me and I followed him on foot until I was utterly tired out. I went into camp and slept so soundly that I did not even waken up until kicked by an Indian."

"Ah!"

"It was to see a dozen redskins about me, and half awake I opened fire."

"Well?"

"It was a hard fight, but they downed me, Bill, and so took me with them, and I found that they had picked

up my runaway horse, also. As I had killed a couple of them they were bent on taking me to their village alive, and for fear there might be cavalry in pursuit, sent me one way with the band you scared off, while the others went in another direction to meet on the river."

"When was this?"

"Yesterday."

"Where?"

"Over near the river."

"What were you doing so far away, Frank?"

"I was on your trail, Bill."

"Mine?"

"Yes, the colonel said you had gone off alone on a trail, the nature of which he could not guess, and so, as you did not return in a couple of days, I asked permission to hunt you up."

"Just like you, Frank."

"Oh, yes, and I found you, too, Bill, or, rather, you found me."

"That is true, and awful glad am I that I did. Now, Frank, how is it that none of the scouts knew this band of sixty warriors were near the fort?"

"They doubtless followed our scouting party in, for I was away, you know, when you left, and the men were not expecting a raid from them."

"Which shows that we must be ever on the watch out here."

"True. But do you give an account of yourself, Billy, for I am anxious to know where you have been?"

"I'll tell you, for I have some work for you to do."

"What is it, and when to be done?"

"It is for you to guide a troop to Death Valley."

"What?"

"I mean it."

"Why, no one goes there, as it is considered certain death to do so."

"True, Frank, but I have been there, and yet I cannot return, as I would wish to do; but you can go, and I wish you to guide a troop there."

"I don't know the country, Bill."

"No one seems to, yet I will post you, for I know it pretty well, and I have maps I have drawn for you."

"I'll go," was the firm response of the Surgeon Scout.

"Well, Frank, as you got into trouble in looking me up, I do not see but that it cancels all gratitude you may feel to me for getting you out of it."

"But do you know it was a mighty close call," said Buffalo Bill, and the two pards continued on their way.

"I know that it was a very close call, Bill, and a daring attack like yours only saved me."

"No, not that, for I mean that it was by the merest accident that I saw your campfire in the canyon. Had I been fifty feet one way or the other off the trail I was following, I would not have seen the fire, for I lost it almost as soon as sighted, and I had to ride back and look it up. If it had not been for the glimpse of the fire I would have ridden right upon the Indian guards over those prairies, for I did not expect to find redskins in that neighborhood."

"You were in luck, and I doubly so."

"Well, it was luck, and no mistake. But now tell me why you were on my trail, Doc?"

"You see, the colonel had an idea that you were off

on some very dangerous mission, from what he told me, as he said you had kept so quiet about it."

"He asked me if I had any idea where you had gone, and as I had not, I felt the best thing I could do was to strike your trail and see if you did not need help."

"Just like you, Pard Frank."

"But it wasn't like me to get captured, eh?"

"No, though I can understand it more thoroughly now, as I have been caught in the same way. But you are ready to act as guide, you say, to a troop of cavalry into Death Valley?"

"I am, though, as I said, I never have been there."

"Well, I suppose that few others had been."

"And you went into the Valley of Death, Bill?"

"Yes, and came very near staying there."

"You went alone?"

"Oh, yes, but I had more company than I cared for, after I got there."

"Well, what do you wish me to do?"

"I have, as I said, a map of the valley, its passes and trails, with distances and all I was able to discover while there. I made notes of it and drew my map at my halt on my way back, so that you will have a fair idea of what to do."

"And not to do?"

"Yes. But with all my explanations, when you have heard my story I feel that you will be able to accomplish what I was unable to do."

"I will try, Bill."

"And trying with you, Frank, means success."

"But there are people in the valley you say?"

"Well, I should think so, a settlement of them."

"Indeed? I never heard of this, though I have heard that several bands of settlers who went there were massacred by the Indians, died of starvation, or were killed by the poisonous vapors the place is reported full of, as well as the waters, which men say are also fatal to any one who drinks of them."

"Frank, I have heard all this, too, and for a long while. It is common talk about the camps. But keep the secret when I tell you that it is all nonsense about poisonous vapors and waters. The Indians have massacred people going there, perhaps after they got there, and trains have died of hunger and thirst upon the desert. But some people have gotten there and are thriving, for I heard of some thirty, and there may be more."

"Settlers?"

"Heaven only knows what they are, doctor. But there is a woman among them, and a handsome girl she is. That girl must be protected and set free when you capture the outfit, along with one whom she will tell you of, a man who befriended me."

"All right, Bill."

"There is one other to look after, but who or what he is I did not know. I found him hanging to a tree, nearly dead, but cut him down, and brought him round, but could learn nothing about him."

"I tell you, Frank, that the Death Valley is full of the weirdest mysteries of any place it was ever my misfortune to run upon."

"We must solve the secret, then, Bill," was the Surgeon Scout's earnest reply.

Without further adventure, Buffalo Bill arrived at the fort with Surgeon Frank Powell, and they went at once

to report to Colonel Merriam, the commandant of the outpost, situated so far upon the frontier and in the midst of deadliest dangers.

They were at once admitted and most warmly welcomed, for Dr. Powell was one of the most popular officers at the post, and his skill as a scout was so well known that he was often allowed to divide his time between scouting and surgery, for he had good assistants to leave in the medical department when he was absent.

The colonel had often told him that he should have been a scout, and then added:

"No, that would not have done, either, for we would have lost one of the best medical men and surgeons in our service.

"Your talents are very equally divided, Powell."

When the two frontier pards entered the quarters the colonel called out:

"Ho, Powell, so you found Cody, did you?"

"No, colonel, Cody found me, for I was captured by Indians, and Cody rescued me."

"A turn about is fair play, but do you mean it?"

"Yes, sir, for I was caught asleep, having worn myself out chasing my runaway horse. In the scuffle several redskins took the trail for the happy hunting grounds, and so I was destined for a roasting when the band reached their village. Bill was on his way to the fort, saw the Indian's campfire, and though they were ten in number, he made an attack and stampeded them, rescuing me. We had a close call for recapture, sir, as another band came up, and we lost a captured pony and Buffalo Bill was wounded, though not seriously. That is all I have to report, sir, except that Cody took desperate chances to rescue me, and he deserves the greatest credit for it, Colonel Merriam."

"Yes, Cody has a way of taking desperate chances. But sit down, both of you, and let me hear your report, Buffalo Bill."

"Thank you, colonel, but both of us are about used up and anxious for rest, especially as Surgeon Powell has undertaken to complete a work I left undone, and he must leave in the morning, sir, of course, with your permission, Colonel Merriam."

"Well, Cody, you do look used up, so go and rest, and you, also, Surgeon Powell. I will hear your report at another time," said the colonel, quietly.

"I have only to say, sir," added Buffalo Bill, taking a paper from his pocket and glancing at it, "that I have here a map of the Valley of Death, in which I spent several days, and Surgeon Powell has promised to guide a troop there, if you, sir, see fit to order it, Colonel Merriam."

Colonel Merriam and the others gazed with amazement, first at Buffalo Bill and then at the Surgeon Scout, at his assertion that he had been in the Valley of Death.

"Do you mean, Cody, that you have dared venture upon a scout into the dread Valley of Death?" asked Colonel Merriam, with intense surprise, while the adjutant and aide-de camp were also lost in amazement at the daring of Buffalo Bill, Surgeon Powell meanwhile calmly surveying the scene with a look of admiration for his scouting pard.

"I have been into the Death Valley, Colonel Merriam, and here is a map I made of it for Surgeon Powell's use," was Buffalo Bill's modest response.

"Well, Cody, you have done what no other man dared do," the colonel said, impressively.

"On the contrary, Colonel Merriam, Surgeon Powell is willing to guide a troop there at once, with your authority to do so, sir."

"Is this the case, Powell?"

"It is, colonel."

"Why do you not act as guide, Buffalo Bill?" asked the colonel, mystified.

"Well, sir, I can only state that I am under a promise not to do so."

"A promise?"

"Yes, sir."

"To whom?"

"To a woman who lives there and who saved my life," was Buffalo Bill's rejoinder.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE DEATH VALLEY TRAIL.

That Colonel Merriam was greatly amazed at the report of Buffalo Bill there was no doubt of.

In his career as a commandant of a frontier fort he had heard the weirdest, strangest stories of Death Valley.

It being beyond a desert, and with no real reason for sending a force there, he had never investigated the truth of the stories told of the valley.

It was said that it was a deadly spot for human beings to venture into, as vapors arose from the ground that were poisonous, and others reported the waters there to be also of a poisonous nature.

Then the stories of the emigrants who had met death there either by being massacred by Indians or destroyed by the vapors arising in the valley, with the wild legends of trappers and hunters of the region being haunted, and all such nonsense, had given to Death Valley a very appropriate name and caused it to be universally shunned by all.

To learn, then, that Buffalo Bill had dared to go there was naturally a great surprise to the officers who heard him say so.

"Well, Cody, you have really been to the Valley of Death?" said Colonel Merriam, with surprise, after a moment of silence.

"I have, sir."

"And came back alive," and the colonel smiled.

"I am alive, sir, but it was by the merest chance that I did return."

"And you do not care to return?"

"I would be delighted to do so, colonel, but I am under a promise not to do so, and to one who is the cause of my being here now instead of lying dead in the valley. I made the promise, sir, for a stated time, and as I fear there will be nothing to discover if I wait until then to go there again, I have asked Surgeon Powell to take my map of the place and follow my directions, so that he can guide a troop there at once."

"Then there is reason for a troop to be sent there?"

"I think so, sir."

"You will not explain what the reason is?"

"I think there is a band of thieves there. I am not sure what or who they are, but if a troop is sent there

I am sure that you will be satisfied with the result, and the mystery of the Death Valley will no longer be a hidden dread to all."

"All right, Cody, I shall be most happy to avail myself of Surgeon Powell's valuable services again as a scout, and he is at liberty to select the troop and scouts he cares to have accompany him."

"I thank you, Colonel Merriam, and I will ask for Colonel Wade's troop, while Cody can detail what scouts he deems best to accompany me."

"Then Captain Wade's troop goes, Powell, so now name your scouts, Cody."

"I would suggest Allen Huntington, sir, and his squad of four, for they are just the men for the work."

The adjutant wrote down the names, and Buffalo Bill continued:

"Permit me also to suggest, colonel, that you send four ambulances instead of wagons, and with casks to carry water for both men and animals, with a bountiful supply of provisions, for they are to go to the best country to die of hunger and thirst I ever saw."

The adjutant again made notes, and the colonel asked:

"Why not army wagons?"

"Because, sir, the ambulances with four mules can make double the time that the heavy wagons can."

"You are right. How long will the expedition last?"

"I would put it down, sir, for all of two weeks, as their stay there may be necessary for some days."

"You think a whole troop necessary?"

"I would think so, sir, and a piece of light artillery, as well, for they are to come and go through an Indian country, and the fact that Surgeon Powell found redskins so near the fort and we discovered their trails much nearer, would indicate that they are moving and in an ugly mood."

"All right, Buffalo Bill, a full troop and a light gun will go, and with Wade in command and Surgeon Powell as guide, I already predict perfect success for the expedition. Adjutant, notify Captain Wade of the duty before him, and Lieutenant Fenton to go with a gun, all to be ready to start at dawn to-morrow," and after a few minutes more of conversation with Buffalo Bill upon the subject, Colonel Merriam bade the two scouting pards good-night, and they retired to their quarters for much-needed rest.

The Surgeon Scout was well rested by his night in his own quarters, and reported on horseback to Captain Wade, who had his troops ready by dawn for the start.

A gun and a dozen artillerymen under Lieutenant Fenton were also ready, and Al Huntington and his four scouts had reported for duty at an early hour.

Buffalo Bill had breakfast with Surgeon Powell, and the two had again gone over all of the particulars which the scout had jotted down for the use of his friend.

"Remember, Frank," the scout had said, "you must be sure and fill every canteen and barrel with water when you cross the stream where the Indians had you a prisoner, for both men and horses will sadly need it."

"Approach the valley by night and camp near the pass where you are to enter and which I have marked."

"From there you can send a force of half-a-dozen soldiers with a scout, to each one of the passes, and leave

your ambulance and gun under a guard at the main entrance to the valley.

"When dawn comes, lead Captain Wade and his attacking force at a swift pace into the valley, following the trails I have marked and then act as you deem best, for it is there that you will have to face the foes you find. If you need aid your squads at the passes, with the gun, can easily be brought up, but I have no thought that there are over thirty-five or forty men in the valley, and Captain Wade's troop numbers seventy, not counting Lieutenant Fenton and his dozen men and Al Huntington and his four scouts."

"Yes, our force numbers ninety-three men all told, Bill, so have no fear of our being worsted if we meet double our number in the valley, or in redskins," said the Surgeon Scout.

"I only wish I could be along, but under the pledge I made I am ruled out. But luck to you, and remember, I hope for your speedy return, and that no harm will befall those whom I have spoken to you of."

"I will look out for them, Bill," and just then Captain Wade rode up and said:

"Cody, can you give me any idea of what we are to meet?"

"I believe, sir, outlaws only, but I did not discover enough to say just what you will have to encounter."

"What outlaws are doing in a land where there is no one for them to prey upon, I cannot understand," the captain said.

"Nor can I, sir. That is one of the mysteries of Death Valley."

"Well, Cody, you may expect a grand report of us, whether we encounter spooks, goblins—yes, all the dangers that haunt Death Valley by all accounts," said Captain Wade, with a smile and wave of the hand as he rode away to take the head of his command.

Buffalo Bill felt deepest regret that he was debarred from going, and stood by the stockade gate gazing after the command as it moved away until a voice at his side said:

"It almost breaks your heart, Cody, to see them go without you."

Turning, he beheld Colonel Merriam by his side, and saluting, he responded:

"Yes, sir, it is hard to remain behind."

"You are not really able to go, for Surgeon Powell said your wound had an ugly look this morning, and so must be looked to."

"Report yourself on sick leave, and take care of yourself."

"Thank you, sir."

"Let me hear your story, for something tells me it is an interesting one."

"I think so, colonel, and you shall be the judge."

"What put you in the idea of going there to Death Valley?"

"The many wonderful stories I have heard of the valley, sir."

"Yes, according to report it has the name of being a Wonderland of Mystery."

"I had heard scouts, troopers, hunters and even Indians tell of the valley, sir, and there is no doubt but that several emigrant trains that pushed that far into the wilds were never heard of more; but the graves I saw

there show that they met the fate it is reported they did."

"You saw graves there then?"

"Yes, sir, in one valley, a number of them, and from close observation I would say that there are others there that I did not see."

"This would imply that the trains of emigrants reached the valley?"

"Yes, sir, and did not perish upon the desert as supposed."

"But died of hunger after reaching there?"

"I do not think so, colonel."

"Ah! what then?"

"In that valley, sir, is game in abundance, and of all kinds. There are some buffalo, elk, antelope, deer and smaller game, with wild turkeys and ducks, so they could not starve."

"But the water?"

"Is pure and of the best."

"The climate?"

"I should say was delightful, sir."

"Your opinion is, then, that those who went to the valley met a tragic end?"

"Yes, sir."

"Massacred by Indians?"

"That is the question, Colonel Merriam, but I saw no Indians there or in the vicinity."

"You saw no traces of them?"

"Not near Death Valley, sir, and I believe the Indians all avoid the valley as the abode of evil spirits."

"That means that the emigrants met their fate at the hands of others than Indians?"

"I do not assert this to be a fact, sir, but I hope that Captain Wade's expedition will give us the truth about the weird place."

"I trust so."

"The fact that there are outlaws there, sir, bothers me, when we take it into consideration that they have no one to kill and rob within a day's journey of the valley."

"May it not be their retreat after having committed their lawless acts?"

"But where do they operate, sir?"

"That is the question, Cody."

"Then, sir, there is no trail to and from the valley."

"You noted this?"

"I did, sir, for I went in a semicircle on the side where it could be approached, and, excepting the trail which the emigrants must have made in going there, I saw no sign of any that had been lately traveled."

"And to the north?"

"There are mountains there through which no trail could be made, sir."

"The more you say of this Death Valley, Cody, the more you mystify me."

"You are right, sir, for the more mystified I am."

"You are sure there are dwellers there?"

"I am, sir."

"You saw them?"

"I was their prisoner, sir. Soon after I entered the valley I found a man hanging to a tree, as I thought, dead. I cut him down, found him alive and brought him round. I left him to get help, but was captured and told by the men who had captured me that I must die.

I was blindfolded and led into some of their retreats, but was set free that night by a girl who refused to tell me anything about herself. I started to look for the man I had left, but found that he had disappeared. Then I again fell into the hands of the inhabitants of the valley, was blindfolded and led into a cave, dark as night and evidently a sort of graveyard for the people who enter the valley and are killed.

"I was to die, but that night the man who appeared to be a leader of the band, visited me and said he would set me free if I swore never to reveal what I had seen there. I was ready to take the oath, but I was saved the trouble by the girl. She had slipped beside me in the pitch darkness of the cavern and took the oath for me, disguising her voice, so you see I am bound by no oath. Then I was set free again, although things were fixed so that it would look as though I escaped myself. I am bound by no oath, thanks to the girl, but I promised her not to return into the valley for six months.

"I was blindfolded most of the time, but I caught sight of the leader of the band, and I know another of them, a fellow called Captain Talbot, for I captured him on my way out, but was forced to set them free by my girl guide."

It was with the deepest interest that Buffalo Bill's story of his scouting in the Valley of Death was listened to by Colonel Merriam.

The scout had told his adventure in the modest way natural to him, and the colonel felt that every word he uttered was perfectly true.

At last he said:

"Cody, I am more mystified than you are about those strange happenings in a valley we all deemed uninhabited. I am very glad that Surgeon Powell has gone to guide Captain Wade there, and trust good may come of it, for we must know who those dwellers there are."

"Yes, sir, and I believe the surgeon and Captain Wade will find out."

"You can not guess who the man was whom you befriended?"

"No, sir; though I did feel that somewhere I had seen him before."

"He was an educated man?"

"Yes, sir."

"And would not state why he had been hanged?"

"No, sir, he gave no reasons."

"But mysteriously disappeared when you left him in the canyon?"

"Yes, sir."

"Taken away by his old foes, I suppose?"

"No, sir, it did not strike me that he had been."

"Then he was not paralyzed as you supposed?"

"He was suffering, sir, I am sure; but if he left the canyon of his own accord he got better very soon after my departure, or he was feigning to be much worse than he was in order to give me the slip."

"But where could he go?"

"I do not know."

"He had no weapons and no provisions?"

"He had a revolver I left with him and the food."

"It is remarkable indeed. But, Cody?"

"Yes, sir."

"Let me tell you a story of an affair that happened some time ago, and which comes back to me now merely

from the fact that you speak of the fate of the wagon trains that penetrated to the Death Valley. It's the story of a paymaster named Talbot Turpin."

"Yes, colonel, I shall be glad to hear the story."

"You say you saw this outlaw chief?"

"Yes, sir, a man of striking appearance, splendidly formed, with a courtly manner, yet a villain throughout, I felt certain."

"There was another known as Talbot, you say?"

"They called him Captain Talbot, sir, and he was a lieutenant to the chief, I take it."

"Well, I wish to tell you that which you may have heard of, about Paymaster Talbot Turpin."

"I have heard that a paymaster by that name, sir, was held up by road-agents, killed and robbed of a large sum of Government money, when he was on his way to pay the troops."

"Well, Cody, the truth is, Paymaster Talbot Turpin was not killed."

"Not killed, sir?" asked the scout, with surprise.

"No."

"It is so believed, sir."

"By all but a few, yes."

"He was robbed by road-agents, it was said, of forty thousand dollars."

"No, he was not robbed, the few who know say, but he robbed himself."

"Robbed himself, sir?"

"The story is, Buffalo Bill, that he was out in his accounts a thousand or two, and arranged a plot by which he would be held up and robbed on the way."

"Yes, sir."

"He hired three men to do the holding up, and he was to have it pass off without bloodshed. But they killed the driver and a guard, and then demanded that he turn over the whole of the money to them or they would inform on him at headquarters. In despair, he at once went with them, sharing the money he had belonging to the Government, and it was reported that he also was killed, and his body, with the others, thrown into the river. Such is the story, Buffalo Bill, though I never believed that Turpin had gone wrong; but now it is known, as I said, by a very few, that he was recognized as one of a band of road-agents—in fact, was their chief—and his field of operations was down on the Overland Trails, so when you spoke of the man who captured you in Death Valley being called Captain Talbot, I at once connected him with the fugitive paymaster."

"It may be, sir."

"Talbot was the paymaster's Christian name, and his rank was that of captain."

"What kind of a looking man was he, sir?"

The colonel described him and Buffalo Bill said, earnestly:

"That outlaw, Talbot, colonel, is the missing paymaster, then."

CHAPTER V.

THE SEARCH.

The expedition to Death Valley was led by the Surgeon Scout unerringly, and by rapid marches until the desert lands were reached, and then a halt was made for a night and part of a day for rest, and to prepare for

the long and arduous pull across the treeless, waterless plains.

The water casks were filled at the last moment before starting, along with the canteens, the horses were allowed to drink their fill and the march was taken up across the arid, hot and parched desert.

At night, as at noon, it would have been a dry camp, and fireless, but for the water brought along and the wood for campfires.

As it was, wood and water were used sparingly, but there was no murmur among the gallant soldiers, and the start the next morning was made bright and early and with a will, though all realized what a hard day they had before them.

The noon day camp was not made as usual, the Surgeon Scout thinking it best to push on until late in the afternoon when they would have to camp until night fall and then make a rapid ride to Death Valley for a night encampment, for then they would find grass, wood and water, and early the next morning could sweep rapidly through the dreaded and fatal vale that had been so shunned by all.

When the first shadows of night began to fall, Surgeon Powell, with Al Huntington and his scouts, started for the valley, the command to follow at a slower pace.

Warned by all that Buffalo Bill had told him, and following the scout's directions to the letter, Surgeon Powell went straight toward the pass which was the main entrance into Death Valley.

It was the one which Buffalo Bill had entered by, and where at that time there had been no guard stationed.

When they neared the ascent of the hill the Surgeon Scout dismounted with Allen Huntington, and the two went forward on foot, leaving the scouts to follow some distance behind with their horses.

They crept up the hill without the slightest sound and at last reached the pass.

Their desire was to come upon the camp of the outlaw guards and surprise and capture them.

But they reached the pass and saw no one.

They made a search about the trail through the cliffs, but found not a sign of a guard.

Then the five scouts came up with the horses and the search was made a most thorough one, but without any discovery.

"They have withdrawn their guards, that is certain," said the surgeon.

"Yes, doctor, they has, for there hain't none here, nor near here, either," was Al Huntington's response.

Frank Powell then sent a man back to bring on the command while he went with Al Huntington down into the valley to find a camping-place the other scouts waiting at the pass.

A half mile down the valley a splendid camp-ground was found upon the banks of a stream where there was wood in plenty, the clearest of water, and a meadow of juicy grass.

A fire was not built, however, as the searchers wished to keep as quiet as possible, but, the command coming up, the horses were turned loose and surrounded by a guard to prevent straying, while the thirsty men and animals reveled in the drinks of pure water from the stream.

Then the animals ran for the meadow and were soon cropping the long grass that grew there in abundance.

The men ate a cold supper, blankets were spread, and, the sentinels being posted, all the rest lay down to get the rest they greatly needed.

There was considerable anxiety shown by the men at their being in the Valley of Death, and a superstitious dread filled the heart of many of the soldiers, after all the stories they had heard of the place.

But the morning dawned brightly, the sun peered over the mountain tops, and a scene of rare beauty met every eye.

It was like a beautiful mirage, so common in that country, with the ranges of mountain, the lovely valley, trees, green grass, flowing streams, and all around a most tempting scene.

But a cold breakfast was eaten, as they did not wish to betray their presence by the smoke of a fire, and then the search was begun for the mysterious dwellers in Death Valley.

Frank Powell recalled that Buffalo Bill had been blind-folded after being made a prisoner by the outlaws, so he could only guess at localities and directions he had gone over under the guidance of his foes.

His map was thorough, as far as it went, and the Surgeon Scout recognized its bearings as he glanced about him in the valley.

"This is the very spot where Buffalo Bill found that man hanging," he said, consulting his map and directions.

The command had been refreshed and rested by their halt in the valley after the long and severe pull across the desert, and so all were ready for the start.

Captain Wade consulted with Surgeon Powell and Lieutenant Fenton, and it was decided that their officer guide should go some distance on ahead, accompanied by the scouts, and the two cavalry lieutenants of the troop should have squads of flankers, keeping along with the command on either side.

The main force, under Captain Wade, with the artillery and ambulances, should keep in the center of the valley, ready for service when needed at any point.

So the start was made, and with ample time ahead, Surgeon Powell, following the map trails, went to the canyon where was the old burying-ground, and which had been the camping-place of Buffalo Bill and the unknown whom he had rescued from hanging.

A short search was made, and the two campfires seen, then the graves, but nothing else.

Pushing on ahead, the scouts moved along the valley slowly, examining the canyons, vales, and timber as they marched, but without seeing anything that looked suspicious.

Game in plenty was seen, and the men were greatly tempted to kill some, but were prevented by the stern discipline ruling over all.

The cliff where Buffalo Bill had been in ambush, and where he had captured Talbot, was passed and beyond was the hill which the Girl Guide had climbed to the bridge.

On and on went the Surgeon Scout, until he came to a great chasm in the hills.

His well-trained eye saw traces of human presence

there in the past, but that was all, for no one was visible anywhere.

Back to the valley he went again.

It was noon now, but the command would not halt.

They must push on and see what was to be found in the valley.

The truthfulness of Buffalo Bill's map was constantly revealed.

"But for Bill's map we might have gone thus far and never suspected that there was other than game in this valley," said Frank Powell to Captain Wade.

"That is so, Powell. What does it mean?" asked the captain.

"It means that those who dwell here have expected visitors and prepared for it, by trying to have the valley appear uninhabited."

"Well, if there are any people in the valley we must find them."

"We must, sir," was Frank Powell's firm rejoinder.

So on they pushed once more until the valley spread off into half a dozen smaller and pretty parks or vales.

There were hills, heavy timber lands, crystal streams, cataracts falling over rocky crags, and everywhere scenes of beauty.

The command went into camp here, and up each one of the five little valleys a squad of cavalry was dispatched.

It was night when they returned, and not one of the officers in charge could report making any discovery.

In a lonely camping-place the command passed the night, and early the next morning the force was divided and again invaded the small valleys.

But with the night they returned to make the same report:

"There is not a human being or sign of habitation in the valley."

But unwilling to give up, Surgeon Powell urged Captain Wade to remain until every inch of the valley could be explored, if it took a month to do the work.

CHAPTER VI.

WHERE DUTY CALLED.

"Well, Cody, what do you think of the long stay of Wade's command?"

So asked Colonel Merriam one morning when the third week was going by and no tidings had come in of the party sent out under the guidance of Frank Powell to reach the Valley of Death.

"Candidly, Colonel Merriam, I am becoming anxious about them," was the scout's reply.

"Then I had better send a force out to look them up?"

"No, colonel, not yet, for the trip is a long and dangerous one, and they may have been detained in the valley from various reasons."

"Then, too, Captain Wade is a most able commander, and you know what Surgeon Powell is, while the force is too large to be overwhelmed by Indians."

"I think you are right, Cody, yet I am anxious at their overstay of time."

"If they do not come in by to-morrow, sir, I will take their trail."

"Are you able to do so, for you have had a hard time with your wound?"

"Oh, yes, sir, it is not painful now, and I am all right."

"Well, you can go, if they do not send us some word by to-morrow night."

"Thank you, sir."

"And if you do not put in an appearance in a few days I shall march at the head of my whole command to Death Valley," the colonel said.

"I will hardly dare go into the valley, after my promise, unless I am sure, sir, that Captain Wade has captured dwellers there; but I can find out enough to relieve your anxiety."

The time passed away and no word came from the missing command, so Buffalo Bill reported to Colonel Merriam the next night for orders to start upon the trail the following morning.

The scout's wound had been more serious than at first believed, and he had been so weakened by loss of blood that he had quite a siege of it in the hospital.

But he had rallied and was quickly gaining his former strength.

"Well, Cody, I suppose you must go?" said Colonel Merriam when the scout made his appearance at headquarters.

"I have made all arrangements to do so, sir."

"You will take some one with you, of course?"

"No, sir, I prefer to go alone."

"I fear you are not yet quite equal to it."

"Oh, yes, sir, I am as good as ever again, and I would prefer to go alone, for you know the command will be found at the other end of my trail."

"Yes, and I only hope you will find them all right."

"I do not fear otherwise, sir."

"Well, should they come back by a different trail than the one they went, I will send a scout to recall you."

"Thank you, sir."

"You start at dawn?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then good-by, and good luck to you," and the colonel extended his hand, which the gallant scout warmly grasped, for he had a warm regard and admiration for his commandant.

Going to his quarters, Buffalo Bill made the most careful preparations for his trip.

He had discovered just what the desert was, and was going to prepare accordingly.

That he was anxious about the command's safety was certain, though he had not shown as much to Colonel Merriam, while in reality he was hardly able to stand the hardships of the trail in spite of his assertion to the contrary.

But Buffalo Bill was not the man to think of himself where duty or friendship was concerned, and he had made up his mind to find Captain Wade's command, if he had to go again into Death Valley.

His promise he would break when he knew that the lives of his comrades might depend upon his actions alone.

So resolving, Buffalo Bill rode out of the fort at day break, once more on the trail that led to the Valley of Death.

Buffalo Bill had prepared for his trail by taking with him a pack horse.

The animal was as good as the one he rode, and carried his blankets, provisions, and two small water casks, a bag of grain, with ammunition and all else that he could take off of the weight of his riding horse.

"We won't starve, and I guess we will have a drink or two of water in crossing the desert, old fellows," said the scout to his horses, who seemed to understand that he was looking after their comfort as well as his own.

The scout struck at once into the trail of the Wade command and pushed along at a steady gait that would carry him many miles between sunrise and sunset.

He had not filled his casks and canteens, as there would be no need of carrying the extra weight through the part of the country where there were streams.

When he came to the last stream before entering the desert land he would fill casks and canteens.

He had put behind him fifty miles when he camped for the night, and he knew at the rate he was traveling the next afternoon would bring him into the desert country.

His camp was a safe one, and with good water and grass at hand he built his fire and enjoyed his supper.

He was very tired, being still weakened by his wound, and soon sank to sleep.

He was awakened by a low snort of his horse, and it was just dawn.

Quickly he was on his feet, and to his ears came the sound of muffled tread.

Was it a herd of buffaloes upon the move?

Was it the command returning and marching by night?

Was it a band of redskins on the warpath?

These questions he could not answer until able to see down into the valley half a mile away, for he was encamped upon a hill.

He stepped quickly to where his horses were staked out and bridled and saddled them, got his traps together and was ready to move.

Then the dawn grew brighter and he saw what had caused the sound.

Far away in the distance was the stream which the military command had crossed in going to Death Valley, and where it must recross or go far out of its way in returning.

The ford was a narrow one, there were high hills upon this side of the stream, and the desert region beyond.

There was heavy timber upon this side, and the stream was wide and a couple of feet deep.

It was the very spot for an ambush and toward it was marching a long file of horsemen. They were Indian braves, and the line was stretched out for miles.

The line curved around the hill, then extended back over the prairie and the end of it was far up the stream.

The horses of the Indians moved along as though they were jaded by a hard ride.

Buffalo Bill was amazed, and he carefully took in the situation, while he ran his eyes rapidly over the numbers.

"They are on the warpath, and there are half a thousand of them if there is one. Yes, I think I understand their game. They have discovered Captain Wade's com-

mand upon the return march, and they have flanked miles around to get ahead of him and lie in ambush at yonder ford. Of course, even Powell will not expect a band of redskins between them and the fort, and they will run right into the trap. Caught thus, and with such a force against them, of five to one, the soldiers may get into a panic, and the result will be a massacre. Yes, they are making straight for the ford, and they will camp there, sending their ponies down the stream out of sight.

"This looks very, very serious, and I hardly see how I can be of much service from my present position. Let me think."

The scout sat down and began to think, his face very stern, and with an anxious look in his eyes.

He was safe himself, even if some curious redskin took a notion to climb the hill, for he could seek safety in flight.

But the fate that might befall his comrades troubled him greatly.

Suddenly he sprang to his feet and from his lips came the words:

"I will do it!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE BRAVE DUMB MESSENGER.

In the few moments which he had devoted to thinking what he could do to save the command of Captain Wade from falling into the ambush, Buffalo Bill had hit upon a plan.

He took out a pencil and piece of paper and wrote as follows:

"COLONEL MERRIAM:

"Sir: I have to report that I made Blue Top Range the first day out, and awakened by my horse at daybreak this morning, I saw a band of mounted warriors upon the march.

"Their horses were jaded, and they were stretched out in Indian file for several miles, their line forming the half of a circle as they moved toward Last Crossing.

"The scouts at the fort will explain to you that this Last Crossing is the very place for an ambush from this side, and a party coming from the other.

"As I write, they are dismounting and their ponies are being sent down the stream to a hiding-place, the dismounting braves remaining in camp at the ford.

"This can only mean an attack upon Captain Wade, whose return they are aware of and therefore wait to ambush him.

"If the command has seen the Indians they may be on their guard, though the chances are that they will not expect to find foes between them and the fort.

"I send this by my faithful horse, Scout, and I know he will go with all speed to the fort, and I would suggest that you send a couple of troops of cavalry by a forced march to this point to hem the redskins in, while I shall start at once to flank the ford, cross the stream at some trail above and thus reach Captain Wade and warn him.

"I will ask him to delay until your force has time to get here, and then to approach the ford as though unsuspecting danger, and open with his piece of artillery, fol-

lowing with a charge, thus surprising where the Indians expect to surprise him.

"We can thus drive them in a panic, and if your force come up in the rear a severe lesson can be given them.

"I will seek to delay the command so as to cross the ford to-morrow, and if my dumb messenger gets to the fort early, the cavalry can reach this spot before day-break.

"With respect,

BUFFALO BILL,

"Chief of Scouts."

This note was fastened securely to the bridle of the pack horse, and the reins fastened up so that he could not get his head down to eat grass on the way.

He was allowed to carry nothing else, so that he could make good time.

The pack saddle was then cached, with all extra weight that Buffalo Bill could relieve his own horse of, and then the scout started down the hill to the valley.

At the stream there the two horses were watered, the rein of the dumb messenger was tied to the circingle to keep his head up, and after being led to the trail by which they had come the scout said:

"Now, Scout, do your duty, for much depends upon you. That is your way and you are to get there in good time. To the fort, sir! Go!"

The intelligent animal appeared to understand what was said, glanced at his master, looked about him, hesitated a moment and trotted away.

"Go, sir, go!"

At the command he started off at a gallop, and as far as the scout could see him he was keeping up the pace, steadily following the trail back to the fort.

"Now it is your time, Banjo, and you have even harder work to do," said Buffalo Bill, and he threw himself into the saddle and started off at a gallop.

The hills hid him from the view of the redskins, and he kept along until at last he struck the trail made by the braves on the march.

They had all passed, but the scout was ready for a surprise, should any occur.

It was a ride of ten miles to the spot where he reached the ford, and an ugly one it was.

But he urged his horse down the steep path into the river, crossed to the other side, and then rubbed the animal dry, which also gave him a rest after his hard gallop.

Knowing that he was out of sight of the Indians on the hills at the ford, the scout struck off across the barren plain as straight as a bird flies.

If he was fortunate he would head the command off before they got within twenty miles of the ford, but to do this he might have to ride thirty miles in a lope.

But his horse was nothing to him if he could gain his object, and the animal was pushed along at a swift and steady gait.

Hour after hour passed, and, excepting short rests now and then, the horse was kept steadily on.

The water in his canteens Buffalo Bill gave to his horse from time to time, though he knew it would leave him upon the desert without any.

If his horse failed him, it would leave him alone upon the desert, on foot and without food or water.

But this did not trouble the brave scout, so long as

his comrades might be saved by self-sacrifice upon his part.

Noon came and passed, but there was no noonday halt, nor food for the scout or his horse.

Afar off on his right were the mountains, and this side of him was a low range of hills, marking the other shore of the river.

There, at a gap in the hills, the scout knew there were half a thousand redskins lying in ambush.

Far ahead rose the blue range that marked the environs of the Death Valley.

Before him, mile after mile, stretched the rugged, barren desert, and his eyes were riveted upon a dark mass visible a couple of leagues away.

"It is the command. They have halted to noon," said Buffalo Bill, and a smile of grim satisfaction crossed his face.

He was glad to feel that he had found them, and more to know that no harm had thus far befallen them.

It was three o'clock in the afternoon when the whole command saw the scout coming.

"It is Buffalo Bill," cried Surgeon Frank Powell, and every eye was riveted upon him, as his panting horse drew nearer and nearer.

"They have had no great trouble, for I can see the gun and the ambulances," muttered Buffalo Bill as he drew nearer.

"But I see no prisoners," he added a moment after.

"Come, old horse, you have done your work well, so need drive yourself no more," and a moment after he drew rein before Captain Wade and Surgeon Powell who had ridden forward to meet him.

"Ho, Cody, glad to see you. Anything wrong at the fort?" asked Captain Wade.

"No, sir, but Colonel Merriam was anxious at your long delay, so I came out to look you up."

"We are all right, but we have not seen a human being out of our own command, since we left the fort."

"You have not, sir?" asked Buffalo Bill, with surprise.

"Not one."

"Not even an Indian, sir?"

"No."

"Then there is a chance for you to see five hundred of them to-morrow, sir."

"Ah! where are they?"

"Lying in ambush, sir, at Last Crossing Ford."

"By Jupiter, but this is news, and we are in luck to be headed off by you, Cody."

"I discovered them at daylight, sir, by my horse awakening me, and the force is five hundred, if not more. They have seen you without doubt, for they had ridden hard through the night to get to the ford and head you off."

"And you came to warn us?"

"I sent a note to Colonel Merriam——"

"How?"

"By my pack horse, sir."

"Will he go to the fort?"

"Straight, sir, and I believe is already there."

"Was it Scout, Bill?"

"Yes, Surgeon Powell."

"Then he is as sure as death. Colonel Merriam will

get the note," was the confident reply of the Surgeon Scout.

"I told the colonel I was going to warn you, and suggested that he send a couple of troops of cavalry to Blue Top to get in the rear of the ambushed Indians so as to hem them in, and if they ride rapidly they can be in position before daybreak to-morrow."

"You are every inch a soldier, Bill, and ought to be a commander."

"Thank you, Captain Wade. But I saw the chances of hemming the Indians in, as you, who knew they were in ambush, could pretend not to do so, approach the river and open with your gun, following with a charge. Their horses are over a mile away, they will be stampeded and run for their ponies, and you can cross, while if a force comes up from the fort you have them between two fires."

"You suggested this to Colonel Merriam, Bill?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good! Then the redskins will be surprised instead of ourselves, though we owe our safety to you."

"Yes, they would have wiped us out if they are that strong. You are always the right man in the right place, Bill," added Surgeon Powell. Then he added: "But you look really ill."

"I have been in the hospital for two weeks with that wound, doctor."

"That is bad; but you can rest now."

"Then we had better go slow, Bill, in approaching the ford."

"Yes, captain, camp on the plain in sight of the redskins, as though your horses were broken down and you could get no further."

"You can camp ten miles from the ford and move slowly on after midnight to get there early in the morning," advised the scout.

CHAPTER VIII.

A FRONTIER FIGHT.

Colonel Merriam was more anxious than he cared to admit about the long stay of the party sent to the Valley of Death.

He could not understand why they should remain longer than a couple of weeks at furthest.

And now he was anxious to have Buffalo Bill go alone on the scout to look the missing party up.

The next day, as his fears increased, he decided that he could send a force out to look after both Buffalo Bill and the command of Captain Wade.

He would send a cavalry officer and a dozen men.

He had given the order to the officer he intended to send, to prepare to depart in the afternoon, and they were about to ride out of the stockade, when the sentinel on the lookout reported a horseman coming far off on the plain.

Soon after he said that it was a horse without a rider, and it was but a short while before all eyes were turned upon an animal coming at a long, sweeping gallop directly toward the fort.

As he came nearer it was seen that he had a bridle on, and that the reins were tied to a circingle.

Then it could be seen that he was dripping with sweat

and halting at the stockade gate he was panting like a hard-run hound.

"A letter pinned to his bridle," said a soldier, handing the paper to Colonel Merriam who had come to the scene.

The horse was recognized as belonging to Buffalo Bill, and a cheer greeted the faithful animal, who had been true as steel to the work that had been put upon him to accomplish.

"Lead that horse away and give him every attention," ordered Colonel Merriam, and he walked toward his quarters, the letter in his hand.

"This is dated at five o'clock this morning, and it is now half-past twelve, and Cody started him fifty miles from here.

"Brave, good horse," said Colonel Merriam, and a few moments after, having read the letter, he gave orders for two troops of cavalry to start at once in light marching order for Blue Top Range.

"I wish you to press on with all speed, Captain Cunningham, and reach the Blue Top Range by midnight, if possible. This will give you time for your scouts to acquaint you with the position, the hiding-place of the redskins, and how you can head them off if they retreat. It will also give you a few hours' rest for your men and horses before going into the fight, but spare neither man nor beast in getting there. I will read you Cody's letter, so that you will fully understand the situation, and I will send a reserve force to follow you rapidly, with provisions, camp outfit, yes, and a couple of guns, so you need carry nothing more than absolutely necessary."

Captain Cunningham listened attentively, heard Buffalo Bill's letter read and said:

"I will get there in time, Colonel Merriam, if man and horse can do it. But will you give me half a dozen of Cody's scouts?"

"Yes, certainly. Pick your men."

"And about what force will the reserve be, sir, so I may know what to depend upon should we meet a larger number than we expect the redskins to be?"

"Your force will be a hundred strong, and I'll send a troop and two guns to support you."

"Thank you, sir, for with these, and what Wade has, we should be able to whip a very large body of redskins. I am ready to start, sir, for my men are mounting, I see."

"Then, push ahead, Cunningham, and good fortune attend you."

Captain Cunningham went briskly out to where his troops had halted, mounted, and amid the cheers of the garrison the gallant Boys in Blue dashed out of the fort to the relief of their endangered comrades in arms.

Colonel Merriam watched their departure and then walked down to the stables to see how the Dumb Messenger was getting along.

"He made a hard run of it, sir, but you see he's all right," said the man who had taken Scout in charge.

"I am glad to hear it, Ben, for I would not have him go under for ten times his value," and patting the horse affectionately the colonel returned to his quarters, saying to himself:

"Cunningham will make the fifty miles by midnight, though he has just ten hours to do it in."

Two hours after, the reserve force, with supplies, moved out of the fort, the commanding officers having orders to travel at a fair speed and push on through the night to get to Blue Top Range early the next morning.

The command of Captain Cunningham pushed on bravely.

Night came on and a horse dropped out dead beat.

His rider remained with him.

Then a soldier gave out utterly and was left with a comrade on the trail.

The pace was a killing one for man and beast, and when the Blue Top Range loomed up ahead and near at hand, a dozen men and horses were strewn along the trail they had come over to await the coming up of the reserve force.

But the determined commander never swerved in his purpose to reach the rescue point on time, and if he left behind him half of his force he would carry out his orders.

Larger and blacker loomed up the range ahead, and just at midnight the worn horses and weary men were halted in the gap where they could be hidden until needed on the top of the hill where they could command a view of the scene of ambush the moment the daylight would permit them to do so.

The position they reached was not far from Buffalo Bill's camp of the night before, and they gladly sought what rest they could get before daybreak, the captain alone remaining awake and on watch.

It was just as the glimmer of light came that Captain Cunningham aroused the scouts, the horses were saddled, and every eye was strained to peer across the undulating land to the river.

The water was soon seen in the distance, and yet not the sign of a redskin was visible upon the hills about the ford.

They were too wary to move out of cover, if still there, until their prey got into their net.

"There they come," said Captain Cunningham, who had his field glasses to his eyes.

He referred to the command of Captain Wade, which was seen across the stream coming over the plain to the ford.

They were a couple of miles yet from the ford, and apparently unconscious of any danger threatening them there.

"Now, men, we will join our fighters," said Captain Cunningham to the scouts, and they led their horses down the hill to where the troopers were in waiting.

Breakfast, a cold one without coffee, for they dared not build a fire, was ready, and the few hours' rest had refreshed both men and horses.

As soon as they had taken their breakfast the troopers mounted and rode into position, just as one of the scouts who had remained longer on the hill came down and reported that Captain Wade was almost up to the ford, while afar off, coming to their aid, was the reserve force.

This cheering news at once had its effect upon the men and they were anxious to commence the battle.

Leading his men to a position where, to go further, would expose them to view, Captain Cunningham waited for the first signal of battle.

That, if Buffalo Bill had reached Captain Wade, he

knew would be a shot from the piece of artillery, and which would surely startle the Indians.

They had not long to wait, though it seemed so to all, before there broke upon the still morning air the deep howl of the six-pounder, returned almost immediately by the bursting of the shell in the hills on their side of the river.

Then came the rattle of small-arms, cheers, wild yells and the redskins were seen by the hundreds rushing out of their places of hiding and running down the river toward their horses, for a form behind them had shown the two troops under Captain Cunningham charging down the stream, the gun meanwhile sending bursting shells into the midst of the savages who were certainly terribly surprised and in a perfect stampede for their ponies.

Up out of the ford came Captain Wade and his men, and Buffalo Bill was seen to be in the front with surgeon Powell, while from the other direction came the troopers under the gallant Cunningham, thus catching the Indians in close quarters.

Lieutenant Fenton got his gun across the river almost as soon as the troopers, and at once began to throw shells into the timber where the Indian ponies were in hiding.

The result was a panic for savage and beast, and, as the Indians fled in wild haste toward the upper ford, suddenly the reserve came into view and headed them off, so that it became a rapid, running frontier fight, fright and flight on the part of the redskins.

Seized with a panic in spite of their numbers, half of them unable to catch their frightened ponies, which the shells stampeded, the Indians were hemmed in and in a condition bordering on despair.

Their hope of triumph had turned into defeat, and they fled in all directions, leaving their outfit and all.

Some were mounted and charged together toward safety in a retreat, others were flying at random hither and thither, though they were on their horses, and still more were afoot and seeking hiding-places in the hills and timber, a few dashing into the river to gain safety on the other shore.

The roar of the guns, for the reserve had come up, the rattle of the carbines and revolvers, with the wild yells of the scouts and cheers of the troopers, were enough to demoralize a much larger Indian army than the one then fighting for their lives.

As well as they could, the tired horses of the troopers kept up the chase, but not wishing to break his men utterly down, and their animals, too, Captain Wade, the ranking officer, had the recall sounded, and the three commands went into camp on the river bank, a few men only being sent to keep up the chase for a short while.

"Those same Indians will never all get together again in a lifetime," said Buffalo Bill, as he returned from the chase among the very last of the pursuers.

Surgeon Powell had just come in also and replied:

"Some were killed, others drowned, and I believe many ran themselves to death."

"We owe the victory to you, Cody," Captain Cunningham said.

"Yes, and our little army would have been as bad off as are the Indians, Cody, had you not headed us off from riding into that ambush," and Captain Wade

spoke with an earnestness which showed that he fully appreciated the services rendered.

"Three cheers for Buffalo Bill," sang out Lieutenant Fenton, and they were given with a will, the handsome scout raising his sombrero in response.

The dead Indians—and there were quite a number of them—were gathered up and buried, and Surgeon Powell looked after the few who were wounded, after he had cared for the soldiers.

There were only a few soldiers killed and less than a score wounded, so that the command had fared well.

A camp was made for the wounded Indians, and a few who had been captured were placed in charge of their wounded comrades, and ponies given them to make their way to their village when able to do so.

The command camped on the river until the following morning and then pulled out for the fort, only a couple of scouting parties being sent to keep an eye upon the Indians and see if there were any other bands in the vicinity.

Another night camp was made before reaching the fort, for the distance was too great to push over unless there was reason for doing so.

The next afternoon when the sun was nearing the horizon the command came in sight of the fort, and as they drew nearer the garrison were delighted to see that the three parties had been united.

All in the garrison turned out to greet the victors, and cheer after cheer rang out as they marched into the fort, the band playing a welcome.

Colonel Merriam was also out to receive them, and his quick glance at the column showed him the well-known forms of Captain Wade, Surgeon Powell, Lieutenant Fenton and Buffalo Bill, and he gave a sigh of relief to see that none of these four had fallen.

As soon as he could do so, Captain Wade, accompanied by Captain Cunningham and the officer who had commanded the reserve, went to headquarters to report to Colonel Merriam, and the story of the expedition was told.

When they had been complimented upon their good work by Colonel Merriam, they took their leave, and an orderly was dispatched at once to request Surgeon Powell and Buffalo Bill to report at headquarters.

When they arrived they were greeted cordially by Colonel Merriam, whom they found alone.

"Welcome back, Powell, and you, too, Cody, and let me say that I sent for you to express to you both my high appreciation of the services you have rendered."

The surgeon and the scout bowed in graceful acknowledgment of the complimentary language of Colonel Merriam, who then went on to say:

"Cody, your good horse brought the message to me in wonderful time, and he is none the worse for his hard run, either, for I went to see him this afternoon."

"I have also seen him, colonel, and he is all right, I am glad to say."

"And Cody made a wonderful ride on his other horse, colonel, to head us off and give us warning of the Indians being in ambush at the ford," said Surgeon Frank Powell.

"Captain Wade has told me of it, and you shall have full credit in my official report, Cody, for you deserve the highest praise, I assure you."

The scout's face flushed, but he bowed, making no reply.

"Now, Surgeon Powell, I have heard from Captain Wade of your expedition to the Valley of Death, and how much he owes to you for your services as guide and adviser."

"Captain Wade is very kind, sir. I am sorry I was not able to do really some service, for our expedition was, I may say, a fruitless one."

"Have you told Cody?"

"No, sir, no more than that we were unsuccessful. We were to talk it over to-night, sir."

"Then let me hear your report, Surgeon Powell, that I may know the full situation, having heard Wade's."

"Certainly, Colonel Merriam."

"Begin at your entrance to the Death Valley, please."

"Well, colonel, in advancing upon the valley we were expecting to run upon a guard and prepared to do so. But we saw no one and so continued down into the valley and camped. We saw that Cody had drawn a remarkably correct map, but discovered that where we expected to find corrals and camps there were none. We went through the main valley to the spot where five smaller ones branch off like the fingers of the hand, and there we explored one by one."

"With no result, Wade says."

"No, sir."

"You found no traces of camps, Surgeon Powell?" asked Buffalo Bill.

"Only in one instance, and that was a canyon where you had evidently camped with the man you found hanging."

"There were no others?"

"None, and there was no real sign that the valley was inhabited. In fact, we found there game in plenty and it was by no means wild."

"We searched each valley thoroughly, every crevice in the rocks and all the canyons and cliffs, but with no result."

"This is remarkable," Buffalo Bill said, and he showed how much he was surprised.

"I thought so, after your having found there a woman and some thirty or forty men, with an unknown man hanged by foes he would not speak of, and who mysteriously disappeared himself."

"Yes, Bill, that valley is a phenomenon of marvels."

"There is something remarkable about it indeed, I am compelled to confess," said the colonel.

"We spent one whole week searching the valley, for the grass was plentiful and of the best, the air was delightful and balmy, the waters of the purest, and there was an abundance of game of all kinds. At last Captain Wade decided to give up the search after one more day going over the valley. He gave orders for the men to go in pairs and threes, and to hunt for signs as though they were searching for gold. We had found no less than three burying grounds, and in one of them were all of half a hundred graves, in the others not so many, and none were near to each other. The graves all looked to have been made years ago, and these were the sole signs of human beings having dwelt there, save the ashes of your camp-fire in the canyon, Cody. That night the men came into camp as they had left it, all but three. These were a sergeant and two men, and they did not return."

We did not start the next day as proposed, but remained over to hunt for them. The search was fruitless, for the men were not to be found, and their mysterious disappearance we could not account for in any way."

The Surgeon Scout had told his story in a way that could not but deeply interest both Colonel Merriam and Buffalo Bill, especially when it added another mystery to those that already hung about the Valley of Death.

"You say that you made a thorough search for the missing men, Dr. Powell?"

"Yes, sir, as thorough as could be made, for I suppose Captain Wade told you that we remained one week longer in the valley merely to search for the sergeant and the two men who were with him."

"Yes, as I said, I had this report, but I wished to hear yours apart from his to see if there might not be some point that we might catch on to give us a clew to the fate of those men."

"I must confess, Colonel Merriam, that I am completely foiled."

"You searched the valley yourself, Powell?"

"Each one in turn, sir."

"There was no reason for the men to desert, for they were all good fellows."

"No reason whatever, sir, and why would men in their senses desert in that region where nothing but death could await them?"

"The sergeant was a man to be thoroughly relied upon even if the men were not, which was not the case. No, the men did not leave of their own free will, Dr. Powell."

"I am sure that they did not."

"If killed you would have found some trace of them?"

"It would seem so, sir."

"Was there no way for them to lose their lives there?"

"Yes, sir, many ways, yet it could hardly be that three men would walk over a precipice, into a pit, fall into a stream, or be killed by falling rocks, where one might."

"No, it could not be that a like accident would befall three men. Which way did they go upon leaving the camp?"

"Well, sir, the men differed in their stories, some saying they had seen them start up one valley, some up another."

"Well, Cody, what is your opinion?" and Colonel Merriam turned to Buffalo Bill, who thus far had made no comment upon the strange disappearance of the three soldiers.

"I do not think, sir, that an accident befell them."

"How about deserting their command?"

"I am sure that they did not do that, sir, for they were all Americans, as I recall the sergeant and the two men, and they would not desert."

"Then how do you account for their unaccountable disappearance, Cody?" asked the colonel, who had begun to feel now that the scout had formed some opinion of the manner in which the three soldiers had disappeared in Death Valley.

"I can see but one way in which to account for it, Colonel Merriam."

"And that way, Cody?"

"You know, sir, that I found in the valley a number of people?"

"Yes."

"I did not see where I was taken by my captors, and I was even blindfolded by my mascot, as I called the girl guide who saved my life."

"I remember."

"Now, I left those people in the valley, and what is more, they were led to suppose that I had met my death, for such the girl told me would be the case."

"Well, Cody?"

"They might, or might not have been so led to believe, and if not, why their natural thought would be, not knowing my pledge, that I would come back with a force of soldiers to investigate the valley."

"Naturally."

"Well, sir, so believing they were determined to go into hiding, and that they did so most completely is proven by the fact that Surgeon Powell failed to find any trails there of horses, that the corral was taken away and every evidence was manifested to show that the place had no dwellers in it, in other words that whatever I might tell of the valley, it was false, that there really was no one there."

"You are reasoning well, Bill," said Surgeon Powell.

"Yes, you appear to be on the right trail, Cody, so go on and tell us just what your views are," said Colonel Merriam.

"From my knowledge, colonel, of the Death Valley, from all I saw and went through with them, I am sure that those who had made it their homes for some evil purpose have been shrewd enough to find there hiding-places almost impossible to discover."

"It must be so, Bill," Frank Powell said.

"Now, I would wish no better person to go on the trail than Surgeon Powell, sir, and he had with him Al Huntington and four of the best scouts on the frontier."

"And all of us were baffled," said Frank Powell.

"Yes, all of you, and yet it seems that if we had been together, Surgeon Powell, we could have found those hiding-places."

"Yes, you are never foiled, Cody, when you work with Dr. Powell," Colonel Merriam remarked, while the Surgeon Scout said:

"I now begin to see it in the light that you do, Bill, that the valley was not deserted, but its inhabitants were merely in hiding."

"Yes, I think so, though I may be wrong."

"I am sure that you are not now, that I look it over, for if they had deserted the valley, as you say, why did they wish to give it the appearance of not being occupied?"

"If they did desert, by what trail did they go when the tracks of their horses could not be found."

"Yes, and they either left the valley temporarily or they went into hiding there in some of its recesses or caverns. I believe, however, that they did not leave the valley."

"I lean to the same belief, Cody, though it is remarkable that Surgeon Powell could not find some trace of them."

"It is, colonel; but he had shrewd men to plot against, and they devoted time and labor to covering up their tracks."

"But the three soldiers, Cody?"

"Those who were lost, colonel?"

"Yes."

"Well, sir, I think they are the ones who found the retreat of the dwellers in the valley."

"Ah!" said the colonel, excitedly, while Frank Powell cried:

"Bill, you have hit the nail on the head, and no mistake. Those three soldiers happened upon the hiding-place of those mysterious valley people?"

"Did the men go away from camp on horseback, Surgeon Powell?" asked Buffalo Bill.

"No, on foot, for we gave the horses a rest the last three days we were there in the valley."

"Then the sergeant and his two comrades happened upon the hiding-place of the outlaws."

"And were made prisoners, Cody?"

The colonel asked the question hopefully, yet in doubt.

"I fear, sir, that if they fell into the hands of those outlaws in the Valley of Death there was no mercy shown them."

"This is terrible to contemplate, and this band of outlaws must be run out of that valley if I have to establish a post there," Colonel Merriam said, sternly.

"Colonel Merriam?"

"Yes, Cody."

"I have a favor to ask of you, sir."

"Granted."

"My pledge was for six months, if you remember, I told you."

"Yes."

"Well, sir, I have kept a pretty accurate account of the days, and I have jotted down that five weeks have thus far gone."

"Yes."

"Now, the expedition into the valley making no discovery, those who dwell there, after a few weeks have passed and no return trip is made for another search, will believe that it is given up as a bad case. They will think that no one will venture into the valley, especially after the failure of the expedition and the loss of the soldiers, and so they will become bold again."

"Yes."

"The balance of my allotted time will soon pass, and then I desire to ask Surgeon Powell to accompany me on a scout into the Death Valley."

"I am with you, Bill, with pleasure," was the surgeon's response.

"What, alone?" asked the colonel.

"Not exactly, sir, for I will go on a scout meanwhile and find the nearest point to the valley where there is grass and water."

"I see."

"To that point I can guide Captain Wade and his troop, with Al Huntington and his four comrades, and then they will be near at hand if needed, and either Surgeon Powell or myself can ride and fetch them."

"All right, Cody, the solving of the mystery of Death Canyon is in your hands, so take your own time and way about it," was Colonel Merriam's response.

CHAPTER IX

HO! FOR DEATH VALLEY.

The return of the expedition under Captain Wade to Death Valley, without success in ferreting out the mysteries of the place, and the most unaccountable disappearance of three of the soldiers who were with the party, added still more to the superstitious dread felt by all. The soldiers talked it over among themselves, and the scouts had their views upon the subject.

Others in the fort also discussed the affair, and the result was that the expedition invading Death Valley but added more to its terrors.

Buffalo Bill had little to say upon the subject, shaking his head ominously when questioned by any one regarding his opinion of the affair, for he wished to cater all he could to the dread of all for the Death Valley. In private, he, however, talked the matter over with Surgeon Powell, and he had made up his mind to go on a lone trail of discovery as soon as he could do so. There was an ugly feeling of the redskins, following their defeat which had been so disastrous, and though it made them cautious not to go so far from their villages, it caused them to become more revengeful than ever. They were prepared for trouble with their paleface foes, and as scouting bands were prowling about the country, Buffalo Bill and his company of scouts were kept constantly on the alert.

The reports brought in by Cody and his scouts of the movements of the Indians were the means of saving a supply train from capture, and a large quantity of Government cattle from being run off.

Several times had the chief of scouts guided Captain Wade and his troopers to catch an Indian band of raiders, until at last the redskins were compelled to retreat to their fortresses in the mountains and were glad to make overtures to become friends with their paleface enemies who beat them at their own games of warfare and cunning.

No sooner had the Indians ceased to give trouble than Buffalo Bill decided to carry out his plan to again enter the Valley of Death, but this time with his border pard, Frank Powell.

He fitted himself out for a couple of weeks' outing, carrying a pack-animal with him, and set out to make a circuit of the Valley of Death.

His object was to find the nearest point to it where a company of soldiers could go into a secret camp and remain for a couple of weeks or more.

He went to the northward upon reaching the river where the battle had been fought with the Indians, and followed the banks of the stream for a day.

Then he branched off toward Death Valley, and the next night encamped in a valley that was an oasis in the desert, for there were water, grass and timber there in abundance.

He had happened upon the little natural park by accident, never suspecting its existence there, and felt sure that no white man had been there before him.

Leaving his pack-horse there the next day, he rode away to see just how near the spot was to the Death Valley.

To his great delight, he discovered that he could ride from there to the entrance of the dread valley within

half a day easily. But he did not make the attempt, merely taking his distances from his coming in sight of Volcano Mountain, which he recognized.

His time was not yet up, and he would not break his pledge.

So he returned to the little park and remained all night, finding his pack-horse as he had left him.

He shot an antelope, and enjoyed his supper, and the next day started upon his return for the fort, arriving without any adventure.

Both Colonel Merriam and Surgeon Powell were anxious to learn the result of his going, and he at once visited headquarters and said:

"Colonel, I have discovered the very place for a camp for a troop, sir, and it will require but one day's journey over the desert to get to it, and from there to the Death Valley is not over twenty-five miles' ride."

"This means that you are prepared to start upon your exploration of Death Valley, Cody."

"Yes, sir, for my six months' pledge expires in just five days and I intend to enter the valley upon the last day of the time agreed upon," was the reply of the scout. The conversation of the scout with Colonel Merriam had resulted in the sending for Captain Wade, and the interview between the three lasted for an hour or more.

The result of this interview was that Colonel Merriam ordered Captain Wade to take picked men from his troop, sixty in all, with the very best of the horses at the fort, and accompany the scout upon the exploring expedition into the Death Valley.

It was a service that Captain Wade was most anxious to go upon, and he told the colonel that nothing should be left undone to make the expedition a perfect success. He was to carry pack horses along, with a full camping outfit and supplies to last a month, and not a man should suspect their destination, while Buffalo Bill and Surgeon Powell would quietly slip away from the fort before the troopers did. Having received all of his instructions from the colonel, and agreed upon a rendezvous where he should meet Buffalo Bill and Surgeon Powell, Captain Wade left headquarters to at once begin preparations for the march.

That night Buffalo Bill and Surgeon Powell arranged their plans, and when they rode away from the fort they carried with them two of their best horses, a complete outfit for camp, and all that they felt would be necessary.

"We must solve the mystery this time, Frank, or they will surely have the laugh on us in the fort," said the scout, while the doctor answered:

"Yes, indeed, Bill, for I must redeem myself for my last total failure as a guide."

"No, it was not a failure as a guide, for you went all over Death Valley, Frank; it was a failure to solve the mystery that lies hidden there."

When ready to depart, Surgeon Powell, accompanied by Buffalo Bill, went to headquarters and bade Colonel Merriam good-by.

"I hate to see you go, and yet I have hopes that you will meet with perfect success," the colonel had said to the two friends as he bade them farewell.

Out of the fort they rode, and they went into camp at the rendezvous appointed with Captain Wade.

The next day they were joined by the captain, and when Buffalo Bill saw the troopers he smiled in a satisfied way and said:

"You have got your best men, captain, and they are stripped for work."

"You find us the work, Bill, and we will do it, and if it is to fight, why we will keep Powell busy as a surgeon rather than as a scout."

"I hope my duties will be to look after wounded outlaws then, Wade," answered Powell.

"Well, we are equipped for a month's stay and have ammunition enough for a siege. I have only the best of my men and horses, and we are ready to follow your lead, Cody, whenever you strike the trail."

The trail was struck soon after, and by easy marches Buffalo Bill led the way to the oasis he had found in the desert.

It was a ride across the desert from day dawn until sunset to reach it, but as they would have a chance to rest, once they reached the pretty park, Buffalo Bill pushed the horses a little hard to get there, being anxious to pitch camp before nightfall.

As the oasis came in sight over the parched plain, the men could hardly believe that it was not a mirage, but at last the outer edge was reached, trees and grass were visible upon each side, as they rode along, and a mile farther on they came upon a perfect little Eden of beauty, a natural park as beautiful as the grounds about a fine old country seat.

"Why, Cody, this is a gem of a place to camp in," cried Captain Wade, while his officers and men were in ecstasies.

The tents taken from the pack saddles were quickly pitched, and the horses were turned loose in the rich meadow lands, for there was no danger of their leaving that fertile spot for the desert surrounding the oasis of beauty.

With wood, water and grass in plenty, and well stocked with supplies, the soldiers were in a very genial mood that night in camp, and fearing no danger the timber rang with song and laughter, for discipline was temporarily relaxed, and the men felt like schoolboys off on a picnic, instead of cavalrymen on a trail the end of which might be death.

Buffalo Bill and Surgeon Powell rested in camp the next day until late in the afternoon, and the scout hit upon a scheme by which a number of miles might be saved, should he or Surgeon Powell have to come in haste after the soldiers.

This was to carry a long pole with them to a pile of rocks some ten miles distant upon the desert and erect it there.

In that clear atmosphere one can see a very long distance, and a flag run up on the pole would be observed by the sentinel kept constantly on guard with a field glass to watch it.

At night a lantern was taken along to run upon the pole, and with either signal set the troopers could hastily saddle up and ride with all haste to meet the scout coming for them, thus saving two hours of time.

Some of the soldiers went along to put up the pole and also the flag and lantern, that those in the park might see how distinctly it could be observed.

It was just sunset when the two scouts left the sol-

diers at the flagstaff and rode on their way toward the Death Valley.

They preferred to reach the entrance to the valley by night, so that they would have daylight to penetrate into it, for though the former expeditions had made no discoveries of any dwellers there, Buffalo Bill was certain that the outlaws were still there, and Dr. Powell had come to entertain the same opinion.

They reached the hill where the pass was just at midnight, and not sure that a guard was not there dared not continue on in the darkness.

So they halted, unsaddled their horses, spread their blankets and lay down upon the rocky ground to sleep until morning, their horses also, realizing that there was not a blade of grass near, wisely doing likewise. With the first signs of the eastern sky lighting up with the approach of day the two scouts were awake, their horses saddled and they were ready for work.

They waited until the shadows were lifting and then rode on up to the pass, approaching it with rifles in hand, as though they expected to find a guard there. But they reached the pass without seeing any one, and halted there.

"See there, Bill!"

"Yes, some charred logs."

"Yes, and these were not here when I was last at this spot."

"You are sure?"

"I am."

"That means then that a guard was put here after you left the valley and kept here for a while?"

"That is what it means."

"There has been no fire here for many a long week."

"You are right."

So on they rode and soon halted again.

"Those tracks are of recent date, Frank," and Buffalo Bill pointed to the tracks of horses visible in the trail they were following.

"Yes, and they doubtless send a man here every day or so to take a look over the desert."

"That is my opinion," and they rode on once more.

They wound down into the valley, rode along until they came to the stream and then turned up the small brook, as Buffalo Bill had done before, to go to the canyon.

They reached the canyon to find there the remains of the fire as it had been left long before, and the graves were there, mute witnesses to some dread tragedy enacted there in the past.

"We can go into camp here, Frank, for the Unknown told me that no smoke could be seen when built here against this cliff, and the canyon was shunned by all in the valley."

"I don't wonder, as they were the makers of those graves yonder. But this is a good camping-place, for wood and water are plentiful and the horses will be in clover."

"Yes, and we could escape, if cornered, by deserting our horses, while we could hold a dozen or more men at bay from this point if attacked."

"Yes, so this will be our base of supplies, and the one starting point to make discoveries of what really is in the valley, for we must go on foot."

"Sure, as we can do far more and not be trailed or seen as easily."

So the horses were staked out up the canyon, a fire was built, and the scouts made themselves comfortable, as though anticipating quite a long stay there.

CHAPTER X.

TRAILING THE MASCOT.

The plan of Buffalo Bill was for Surgeon Powell and himself to put on moccasins, carry a couple of days' provisions and go out on foot, leaving their horses fenced in in the upper part of the canyon, by stretching their lariats across the narrow space between the cliffs.

Thus left in security the horses could get water and grass at will, and not demand the immediate return of their riders to look after their comfort.

All ready for their starting, the two men left the canyon in the afternoon and made their way down into the valley.

Their buckskin-clad feet left no tracks, and they were as cautious as Indians on the warpath.

They reached the larger stream that ran through the valley, turned up it and made their way with the greatest caution where Buffalo Bill had once before been in hiding, and where he had captured Talbot, the outlaw.

Without seeing any one, they reached the cliff and sought shelter in the hiding-place where Buffalo Bill had been concealed.

There were the tracks of horses about which told that men had passed and repassed there, and that was just what Buffalo Bill expected.

Spreading their blankets they made themselves comfortable until nightfall, when they ate a cold supper and sallied forth to reconnoiter.

"I am anxious to discover if the corral is at the same place," said Buffalo Bill.

"From whence it had been removed before I got here, Bill?"

"Yes."

"We will soon know."

"There is no danger of meeting these fellows abroad at night, Frank, for they are very superstitious and will not travel unless necessary, so we need not be so cautious as by daylight."

So on they went and after a brisk walk came in sight of the corral.

The snake fence of poles had been replaced, and there were half a hundred horses in the enclosure.

"Here is a good haul at least," muttered Buffalo Bill.

"Yes, and they are good animals, too."

"They are indeed."

"But were these in the valley when I was last here?"

"Sure."

"But where were they hidden, Bill?"

"That is what we must find out, Frank."

"The men cannot be very far away."

"It would seem not and we will continue on up the valley in search of them."

They went half a mile further and came to where the five valleys branched off from the one large one.

"Now which way, Frank, for I was blindfolded when I passed along here?"

"I searched each valley here thoroughly, and there is yonder on that hill a good hiding-place."

"Better find one down here among the rocks, Frank, so we will be near to get a prisoner should any one come."

"You are right," and the two set to work to find a hiding-place, both realizing that just at that point was the spot for them to lie in ambush during the next day to see who should pass and repass along the valley trail.

They found a secure spot among the rocks and then kept up their reconnoitering as well as they could, but without making any discovery.

At last they retreated to their hiding-place, convinced that the daylight was their best time to make observations and to act.

They sank to sleep almost immediately, confident that there was no need to keep watch, and the sun was rising when they awoke. They glanced about them with interest at what they saw. They were on a point between two of the smaller valleys and looked down the large one.

Fresh tracks were visible going and coming in each valley, and at the place where they all formed the one large vale was the corral of horses.

"Those horses seem to be kept there for the use of any one going up or down any of the valleys, Frank."

"So it seems; but hark!"

They both listened, and the sound of hoofs fell on their ears. A horseman was coming down the nearest valley at a gallop. Nearer and nearer resounded the hoof falls until suddenly there dashed into view the horse and rider.

The two scouts had their rifles ready, but when the rider appeared they lowered them quickly, for it was a woman.

"My Girl Mascot," said Buffalo Bill, in a whisper, though the fair rider was all of a hundred yards away from them.

The mascot hesitated at the spot where the valleys joined, looked about her in an interested way and then came slowly along the trail which must bring her within a few yards of where the two scouts were in hiding.

Gazing at her from between crevices of the rocks, Frank Powell said:

"She's a beauty, Bill, and no mistake."

"She is indeed, Frank."

"Shall we hold her up?"

"Not now."

"Why?"

"Await her return, for we may be able to catch a man, or there might be one near her."

"All right, you know best."

The girl was mounted upon a spirited roan, and she sat her saddle with both grace and skill.

She wore a Mexican riding habit, with silver-embroidered sombrero, and gauntlet gloves.

She carried a rifle swung from her saddle-horn and in a belt about her slender waist was a revolver and knife.

Her form was elegant in outline, and her face certainly very beautiful, though it had a sad expression visible even to the two scouts from their hiding-place.

She rode slowly by and so near that Buffalo Bill could have caught her with a lariat.

"That girl is unhappy in the life she leads here, Bill," said Frank Powell as she passed on.

"She looks it. But what do you think of her?"

"She is beautiful."

"I do not mean that, but is she wicked?"

"If she is, then her face belies her."

"It does. Yet she is the ally of outlaws."

"Are they outlaws, Bill?"

"Could they be honest men and good, when they hanged the man I rescued, intended to put me to death, and had killed others?"

"Ah, yes, I had forgotten that, and that young girl caused me to feel for a moment that they might not after all be evildoers."

"Then why hide as they did when you invaded the valley?"

"I have no more to say in their defense, Bill."

"That they are evil men there is no doubt in my mind; but the question is what is that girl to them, and why does one with a face like hers ally herself to outlaws?"

"It is another of the mysteries of this most mysterious Valley of Death, Bill."

"Well, we must watch for a man to come along, and, if we can do so without a row, hold him up."

"Certainly, for we may get valuable information from him."

"Very true. But if we see no one else then we must catch the girl upon her return."

"Bill."

"Yes, Frank."

"The girl knows you by sight well, she has befriended you, extracted from you that six months' pledge—"

"Well?"

"Now, if I were to be seen with you it might set her to flight in alarm, while you alone showing yourself would not frighten her away."

"You mean for me to appear alone to her?"

"Yes."

"I will then, and not so suddenly as to startle her."

"It will be better than to attempt her capture."

"I think so, especially as I remember how she treated me."

"She may befriend you still in helping you unravel this mystery."

"Perhaps."

"But if not?"

"She must know that we have come here to win the game we are playing, and I shall hold her as a prisoner until she yields to our wish that she betray the secret of the valley denizens."

"She has a will of her own, Bill, and may resist."

"True, but she knows what these men are and can make terms for herself by doing as we demand."

The girl meanwhile had passed on out of sight down the valley, and the two friends sat patiently awaiting the next turn in the tide, so to speak.

Again, an hour after the girl had gone by, they heard the clatter of hoofs and got ready for action.

Under no circumstances could they avoid doing so, did they wish to discharge a rifle or revolver, knowing that they would betray their presence to more than they cared to meet.

The horseman soon appeared in sight, but he came

down a different valley from the one the girl had ridden out of. It brought him out at a point two hundred yards from where the scouts were hiding, and halting a moment he seemed searching for a trail. Then he found what he was searching for and went off at a gallop down the main valley.

He was following the trail of the horse ridden by the girl, and he was none other than the masked chief of the band dwelling in the Valley of Death.

Surgeon Powell had remarked upon the magnificent appearance of the chief, and both wondered why he had so rapidly followed upon the trail of the Girl Guide.

A couple of hours passed away and then the girl came in sight upon her return.

Both Buffalo Bill and Surgeon Powell were glad to see this, and that she had in some way missed the chief.

As he drew nearer Buffalo Bill was preparing to step out and confront her, when suddenly Surgeon Powell uttered a cry of warning.

The scout shrank back behind the rocks, while the surgeon said:

"See there!"

He pointed down the valley, and there came the chief, his horse on a run. They dared not now allow the girl to see them. She had gotten almost opposite to their position when a loud call caused her to turn quickly in her saddle. She glanced behind her to see the chief, and for a moment she seemed undecided whether to ride rapidly on or halt. Then she muttered, and the two scouts distinctly heard her words:

"It might as well be now as another time. I will wait."

She turned her horse about, and the animal now stood not fifty feet from the position occupied by the scouts.

On came the chief, having slackened his pace from a run to a canter when she halted for him.

"I have followed you for several hours, for I had hoped to head you off before you went down the valley," he said, when he came up.

"What have you to say to me, chief?"

"I need not repeat to you that I love you."

"No, for I do not care to hear it."

"What is your cause of hatred against me?"

The girl laughed bitterly and then replied:

"Do you forget that you are a natural villain, while I still love honor and truth, in spite of having been forced to live in this vile spot among men who are lawless, murderers, yes, and thieves?"

"Be careful how you speak," and the man spoke with anger.

"Why should I when I speak of the men whose leader you are?"

"I am chief here, as you know, girl."

"Oh, yes, you are chief, yet I am queen, and the men hold allegiance to me alike with you."

"The more reason that you should be my wife."

"Oh, no; life to me is bitter enough without such a fate as that."

"You can leave here when you will, if you pledge yourself to marry me."

"The temptation to leave is not so great as to cause me to do that."

"Why?"

"Well, as you ask the question, let me tell you that

you won my friendship under false pretenses. Pretending to be the devoted brother of one I loved, I trusted you, and with my father came with you to where we fell into your power. I came, believing the one I loved to be dying, and instead I discovered that he had been ruined by you. I found that you had destroyed his honor, had made him an outlaw, and caused him to fly for his life. Then, when I was in your power, you demanded that I should learn to love you. You gave me two years in which to make up my mind, and inveigled my poor father into giving his consent by promising him a half-interest in your fortune.

"Gulled by you, and blinded by the glitter of gold, he was glad to remain here, all the while trying to believe you were not so wicked as the men knew you to be. But, thank Heaven, I held firm and refused your demand that I should marry you, and to-day I still am free, and not wedded to the vilest of wretches, the one who broke into my young life and robbed it of my happiness by destroying the one whom I loved."

"Then you refuse to go from here and marry me?"

"Most emphatically I do."

"Then I shall show you, girl, that I have the power to force you to obey," was the savage response of the man.

The young girl merely laughed in a sarcastic manner and said:

"Your threats have no terror for me?"

"Why?"

"Well, I am armed and so I am able to protect myself from any coward that crosses my path."

"You dare call me coward?"

"To threaten a woman shows that I do not make any mistake in doing so."

"You know that I have a fortune, that I can give you a life in foreign lands as luxurious as the queen whose name you bear?"

"I can live without your aid, chief."

"And you will go from here and our paths part in life?"

"Yes."

"I say no."

"And I say yes."

"I told you that I could force you to love me."

"You can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make him drink, is a very truthful old adage," the girl said, cuttingly.

"You love your father?" he suddenly asked.

"Ah, yes, but too well. With his sad love of gold that has made him ally himself to you, to allow me to live in the atmosphere of lawlessness, I do love my father, truly and devotedly," and she spoke most earnestly.

"You would not see him die?"

"Heaven have mercy, no!"

"Then hear what I have to say."

"What would you do?" she asked, excitedly and in alarm.

"I shall govern you through your father."

"My father is willing, Heaven forgive him, to see me marry you, but he would never force me nor allow you to do so."

"I can force you through your love for him."

"Ah!" and again she wore a frightened look.

"I will reveal to you, Queen, that if you do not vow

to marry me, when we reach the nearest settlement where we can find a clergyman, I will put your father to death with no more mercy than I have caused other men to die."

The girl's face was bowed now, her form quivered, and she seemed deeply moved.

At last she said:

"I am one who if I give my word will keep it."

"I well know that, Queen."

"Then give me ten days to consider."

"No, for you know that we leave here within the week, that we are all ready, for it will not do to longer take chances of remaining here, now that we know Buffalo Bill was not killed in making his escape, as we all supposed."

"You have just one minute in which to make up your mind," and the chief took a gold watch from his pocket as he uttered the words that were such a cruel threat to the young girl who was in his power.

CHAPTER XI.

IN THE TOILS.

Buffalo Bill and Surgeon Powell had heard every word uttered.

They crouched down in their place of hiding and watched and waited.

Either could have killed the chief with a pistol shot, but they knew not what the result of the report might be.

At last, as they saw that the chief and the girl were too deeply occupied to observe them, they decided to act.

The chief sat on his horse with his back to the rocks.

The girl faced them, but her head was bowed now in her hands.

Buffalo Bill at once acted then and promptly.

He glided as noiselessly as a panther, and from among the rocks, crept up behind the outlaw, and with a stroke of his revolver barrel dealt him a severe blow on the back of the head just as Surgeon Powell sprang forward and grasped the reins of his horse.

The blow caused the chief to reel and fall from his saddle, and at the sound the girl looked up and uttered a cry of mingled alarm and surprise.

The cry had hardly left her lips, however, when in the tall form bending over the fallen chief she recognized Buffalo Bill.

"Oh, Buffalo Bill!" she cried, in a tone of joy.

The scout raised his sombrero quickly and went on binding his prisoner, who was showing signs of returning consciousness.

He had already disarmed him and was using his own lariat for bonds.

He also took the precaution to put a rope gag in his mouth and dragged him into the retreat among the rocks and left him just as he turned his wild eyes upon the scout, who had torn from his face the half mask he wore.

Surgeon Powell meanwhile had held on to the outlaw's horse and at the same time spoken a soothing word to the young girl, who was all unnerved.

But she recovered herself and said quickly:

"From what have you and your friend not saved me, Buffalo Bill?"

"We heard enough to know what you have suffered, miss, and we came here hoping to save you, for I was sure that you could not be bad."

"You did not keep your promise?"

"Yes, the six months were up yesterday, and then I returned, along with my friend Surgeon Powell of the army."

"You returned only yesterday?"

"Yes, miss."

"That cannot be."

"Yet it is true."

"Then who has killed secretly the half-dozen men of the band in the past two months?"

"I could not tell you."

"Do you tell the truth, Buffalo Bill?"

Before Cody could answer the Surgeon Scout said:

"I can vouch that he does, miss, for we came to this valley only yesterday, and together; but nearly five months ago I was here and spent two weeks in exploring these surroundings."

"Yes, I recognize you now, and you came with a cavalry command?"

"I did."

"And found nothing?"

"We found nothing."

"I saw you from my place of hiding and at first I thought you were Buffalo Bill, and then knew that I was mistaken. The men saw you, too."

"Where were you, may I ask?"

"We were in hiding."

"In this valley?"

"Yes, for we have hiding-places no one could find."

"You are not wicked, I know, so why did you not betray your band?"

"For the same reason that I exacted a pledge from Buffalo Bill not to come here again under six months."

"What was that?"

"Because my father, I shame to say, is one of the band, and I had hoped that in that time he would have left here, and then, if you returned, you could capture the outlaws."

"Then they are outlaws?"

"Oh, yes, there is no need to disguise it now. Yet I must say to you that my father was deceived into coming here, as I was."

"We can well believe that, after all we have overheard," said Buffalo Bill.

"But you must go from here at once, for your lives will be the forfeit. Quick! some one of the band may come along at any minute, and you are lost. You must go, for there are some twenty desperate men now in this valley."

"And we have three-score brave troopers not very far away," was Buffalo Bill's response, and he added: "No, miss, we have come to stay."

The young girl eyed Buffalo Bill closely as he spoke, and then said:

"You have troops near?"

"Yes, I can get them here by to-morrow's sunrise."

"Then let me beg you to go after them at once, and then I will feel content. Alone you two will be sacrificed."

"Surgeon Powell?"

"Yes, Bill."

"Will you mount this horse of the chief and ride with all speed for Captain Wade while I go into the hiding-place there and hold the prisoner until your return? In the meantime I will learn from this young lady just where to find this band, so that we can go at once upon your return with the men and attack them."

"I will be off at once; but will not the chief be missed?"

"The young lady must explain his absence in some way, Frank."

"Then I am off," and Surgeon Powell leaped into the saddle and was about to dash away when the girl said:

"Take the chief's hat and mask, and coat instead of your own, sir, in case you should meet any of the men down the valley, though I do not believe one of them is away from the upper camps."

As soon as the girl had made the suggestion Frank Powell had acted upon it, and the exchange was quickly made, and away went the Surgeon Scout down the valley in a sweeping gallop.

"Now, Buffalo Bill, I wish to make terms with you," said the young girl when the doctor had left.

"I am willing, miss, for I owe my life to you."

"Do not put it upon that basis, only upon the fact that you are to kill or capture this band of outlaws and get considerable booty."

"All right, what are your wishes, miss?"

"A compromise."

"Name it, please."

"My father is nominally one of this band."

"Yes."

"He was the one who allowed you to escape, and, as he supposed, administered the oath to you in the cavern."

"I thought as much."

"He was a good man until he was inveigled here, and then, tempted by the glitter of gold, he yielded to the chief's wishes and became his partner."

"Well?"

"He has never raised a hand against a human life, and has tried to protect unfortunates who have fallen into the power of the chief, as I have also done."

"I can believe that."

"My father now has three of the soldiers whom Surgeon Powell led some months ago, hiding them away where the chief believes them to be dead."

"Thank Heaven for that."

"Yes, they ran into one of our hiding-places and were seized. The chief sentenced them to death, but my father, pretending to carry out the command, kept them in hiding, though prisoners in irons."

"I certainly am delighted to hear this, miss."

"For this reason I beg for the freedom of my father and myself."

"You shall have your wish, I pledge you my word."

"But this is not all."

"Well?"

"I wish our share of the fortune here, for my father has worked hard to get it—yes, and sinned for it, too."

"You mean the booty the outlaws have gotten in their robberies?"

"Oh, no, for what these have robbed people of now and then amounts to nothing."

"What do you mean, then?"

"I mean that there is a gold mine in this valley, which the chief and his men have been working for several years.

"The chief discovered it years ago, but it needed machinery to get at it, and he had no money to buy it with. He therefore made up his mind to get money at all hazards, and he plotted the ruin of a noble man to do so. That man was one I loved with all my heart, and was the chief's brother. He was a paymaster in the army, and he was led into a trap by the chief and made a prisoner, and his money taken from him.

"As he hated him for winning my love, he said, he got his revenge by impersonating his brother as paymaster, having his men attack the stage coach and pretend to rob him, the supposed paymaster, while he afterward spread the report that Captain Talbot Turpin, of the army, had robbed the Government and fled.

"When released from his imprisonment, Talbot Turpin found himself a ruined man, and went Heaven only knows where; in fact, I fear he took his own life, for he found that I had gone off with his brother. This I did do, with my father, but it was, as he told me, to take me to my lover, who was badly wounded. In this way he got us into his power, and kept us here, for here is where we came. The money he robbed the Government of, taken from poor Talbot, he bought the necessary machinery with, and ox-trains brought it here.

"Those who he had to get to help him were sworn in as his band, and they have all a share in the mines, which have yielded most liberally. That which belongs to the outlaws is your prize, I know, but I ask for what is my father's, for then I will be able to search the world over and find Talbot Turpin, if alive, and clear his name of dishonor."

Buffalo Bill listened with rapt attention to all the young girl said and then remarked, as he now saw clearly through the mystery:

"I can refuse my mascot nothing, and you and your father shall have your own. But now let me ask you, if, to keep the secret from being found out, the chief has killed those who came into this valley?"

"He has, though he believes that some one else held the secret years ago, and massacred a wagon-train of emigrants that came here."

"That accounts for the graves in the canyon, then?"

"Yes, but now tell me again that you have not been the one to kill so mysteriously seven of the band of outlaws of late?"

"I have not."

"Then who has done this killing?"

"I cannot tell you."

"The chief has thought that it was a plot among the men to kill off each other that the share of gold might be larger for those who remained."

"It may be the case—in fact, it must be."

"For that reason we were to leave here within a few

days; but thank Heaven you are here to end this life of crime, for those outlaws are one and all guilty of the vilest crimes," said the girl, earnestly.

"Now will you remain here with the chief, until your soldiers come?" asked the young girl of Buffalo Bill.

"I will, and he will be safe."

"I do not doubt that, and I will excuse his absence as best I can, but I must tell my father all."

"You can trust him?"

"Oh, yes, and he will be a happy man."

"But when the soldiers come?"

"Well?"

"Are you to be my mascot still? Will you be my guide to the retreat of the outlaws?"

"I'll tell you what I will do."

"Yes."

"The outlaws will not go abroad at night, and so I will come here for you."

"That is a good idea."

"You can tie the chief so he cannot escape, and then go with me until I show you the secret retreats, and they are not as far from here as you think."

"The men will be there?"

"Oh, yes, and I'll show you where you will find my father and myself."

"That will be well."

"Now I must return, but expect me soon after dark," and with this she leaped into her saddle and rode away.

She had not been gone long before Buffalo Bill saw a man coming up the valley.

The scout was all attention at once, peering out from his hiding-place to which he had retreated.

To make it the safer he gagged the chief more securely, and then watched the coming man.

He came on cautiously, and as he drew nearer Buffalo Bill saw that it was none other than his unknown comrade, the one whom he had brought back to life after cutting him down from the tree.

He was about to go out and meet him when the man came straight toward his hiding-place.

A few seconds more and he came in behind the rocks and was face to face with Buffalo Bill.

He dropped his hand upon his revolver, but recognized the scout at once and cried:

"Great God! you here, Buffalo Bill?"

"Yes, I—"

But ere the scout could say more there came a deep groan from the bound and gagged chief, and turning upon him Buffalo Bill thought he was dying.

The Unknown also saw him then and cried savagely:

"At last we meet again, my brother. But for the fact that I see you this scout's prisoner, and know that you will hang for your crimes, I would be tempted to stain

my hands with your blood, be you to me what you may."

The scout had removed the gag from the mouth of the chief, and there came the words in gasps:

"The dead has arisen! You are——"

"I am no ghost, Hugh Turpin, but flesh and blood. You had me hanged, but this brave man came along in time to save my life. You dishonored me before the world, made me appear like a thief, and, when at last I escaped from you and could return, I dared not until I had proof of my innocence. I dared not let this noble man carry me back to the fort, so I deceived him and escaped from him.

"But I remained in this valley to hunt down your band and some day show that I was not guilty. Now I will force the truth from you."

"If you will set me free I will confess all the wrong I have done you."

"No, you are not my prisoner."

"There is no need of further proof, Captain Turpin, for I know you to be that officer, than can be given by the lady you love and her father, and whose names I do not know."

"Ah! Queen Kent and her father? Yes they are here and in this man's power."

"They are no longer, sir, and Mr. Kent and his lovely daughter are to go free from here, I pledge you my word.

"But I must gag this man again, as some one may pass."

The scout again gagged the chief, and then sat down with Captain Turpin to hear the story he had to tell, for he said:

"I had begun my work of revenge, scout, and already had faced seven of the outlaw band, watching my chance and catching them alone. I did not assassinate them, but met them as a man, face to face, and mine was the better aim, guided by just revenge."

For a long while the two so strangely met talked together, and at last the shadows of night crept over the valley.

Then, true to her promise, Queen Kent came to meet Buffalo Bill, and it was the happiest hour of the scout's life when he was able to tell her that her lover was alive and near her, and then he called him out to meet the maiden.

Of that meeting we must not speak, save that to say that Captain Turpin told Buffalo Bill that the joy he then felt repaid him for all that he had suffered in the past.

It was not daybreak when Surgeon Powell guided

Captain Wade and his troopers up to the spot where Buffalo Bill was awaiting them.

The scout hastily explained to Captain Wade the situation and presented him to Captain Turpin, whom he had never met, telling him his story.

Then he told how he had been led by his mascot to the recent retreats of the miners and he would guide the soldiers there.

These retreats were on the inaccessible hill tops, except through caves in the cliffs, entrances to the caverns being concealed by painted canvas to look like rock, thus cleverly throwing all off the track who reached for them.

To the hill-top horses and all had been taken by the outlaws, for once up there a valley was found upon the summit of the range, and a dozen acres in size.

So Buffalo Bill led the troopers to the attack, up through the caverns, and the outlaws, just at daybreak, saw the Boys in Blue dashing into their retreat.

They fought desperately, however, and only a few of them were taken alive.

Mr. Kent and his daughter were found elsewhere, and after a halt in the valley of several days the soldiers started upon their return for the fort, accompanied by the man who had been the partner of the outlaw chief.

The gold found was not so much as was expected, and as the outlaw chief at least had a claim to that, he gave to his brother his share to restore to the Government the amount he had taken from him.

On the way back to the fort the chief and his lieutenant, whose name was also Talbot, attempted to escape and were shot by the sentinels on duty, and thus their careers were ended by a bullet instead of a rope.

In due time the command arrived at the fort, and Colonel Merriam was glad to know the successful ending of a red trail, and that his friend Talbot Turpin was not the guilty man he had been accused of being.

He lost no time in sending the prisoners off for trial, but was sorry not to be able to keep Captain Turpin, Mr. Kent and Queen at the fort for a long visit.

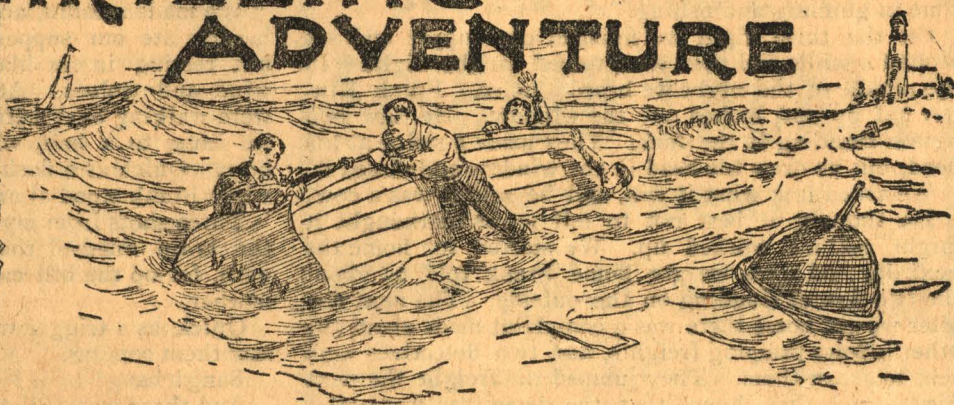
The paymaster sent in his resignation, with a full statement of facts, and then went with Mr. Kent and his daughter back to their old home, where the lovers were soon after united in marriage.

THE END.

Next week's issue (No. 58) will contain, "Buffalo Bill's Mysterious Trail; or, Tracking a Hidden Foe." Buffalo Bill made many foes among the outlaws and desperadoes, but never a more desperate one than the man whose adventures with the scout and final defeat will be told in next week's issue.



THRILLING ADVENTURE



Did you ever play ping pong, boys? It's a game some people play when they want excitement and can't find it.

You don't need to. Anybody who wants excitement ought to enter this contest and then read some of the thrilling stories we print every week.

They'll get all the hair-raising thrills they want, and a chance for a dandy prize into the bargain.

For description of prizes and full particulars look on page 31.

A Whaling Incident.

(By Alden Allen.)

When I was seven years old I shipped on a bark from New London bound for the South Seas after whales.

I was gone twenty-two months.

After securing some eighteen hundred barrels of oil, we started for home, touching at Capetown, Africa. After leaving Capetown and passing St. Helena, we sighted a sperm whale about four o'clock in the afternoon.

Lowering three boats, we were soon racing after them as there is always a rivalry among the boats' crews of a whaleship as to who will be the first to fasten to the whale. I was then nineteen years old and boat steerer of the starboard boat, the second mate heading it.

We were the first to come up with the school and the mate calling me up as we were nearly alongside of the bull, I soon had both irons cleap to the sockets in him.

He instantly sounded, taking out both tubs of line, which held sixty fathoms each, making seven hundred and twenty feet of line.

Then the line began to slacken, showing the whale was coming up, but where we could not tell.

Working at the steering oar under the mate's directions, I was trying to keep the boat away from being over where the line indicated Mr. Whale was, but he was coming up faster than we calculated.

Without any warning, he struck us directly under the center of the boat, breaking clear out of the water and commenced a terrible flurry, mixing up boat, men and whale in one terrible mass, I being in the sternsheets of the boat, where I had gone after harpooning the whale, changing ends with the mate, who is supposed to finish him.

I stood over the coil of line that was being drawn in by the boat's crew as the whale struck the center, breaking the boat in two. I went over backward with the line

falling over me. The first I realized I was being drawn down with lightning rapidity. The whale had sounded again. I had the line around my leg and I was trying to get loose.

How I ever got my sheath knife in my hand and cut the line I don't know, but I did, cutting my knee as well; and then I commenced to work my way to the surface.

My breath was almost gone. I commenced to gasp, and finally had to open my mouth and just as I began to lose my senses I came to the surface where the other two boats were picking up the other men.

We never saw two of the crew again. The water was covered with the wreck of our boat, blood and shark fins.

We were carried aboard ship and soon recovered our wits, but that few seconds seemed hours to me, and the memory of it will never leave me.

What Jealousy Will Do.

(By Wm. A. Oesterley, New Jersey.)

In the city where I now live there were ten boys living in the same neighborhood. Six of these boys were jealous of the other four of us, and every one in the neighborhood liked us, but no one liked the other six.

Their names were Mike Bogan, Dago Hale, Kurley Kole, Jess Smith, Frank Smith and Rob Taylor, and the other three young men's names are Frank Kinney, Robert Ellis, Harry Johnson and my name is Wm. Oesterley.

Wm. Oesterley, myself, was very sickly at the time, and I, being a cripple, the other three boys got up a raffle to raise enough money to build a small boathouse out in the country, so that they could give me an boating once in a while. The house was built, and we four went out to spend a week; we had been there three days,

doing our own cooking, and spending the rest of the time in gunning and fishing.

On the third night we finished our supper and sat around a while and then went to bed for the night. In the middle of the night we heard a noise. Frank Kinney got up and looked out the window. He saw two figures standing in the dark. They made a swipe at his head, but he drew his head in the window and closed it.

We asked him what it was, and he said it was a cow.

He thought it best not to tell me as he thought it might get me worked up. We started for home the next day and when we got home Frank told us about the two figures standing on the outside. The next day after we got home there was a complaint made about the other fellows jumping freights, and two detectives were sent to arrest them. They jumped the freight the next night, and they knew that the detectives were after them, so they fixed a trap for them. As soon as the detective put his foot on the step a rope drew around it and held him fast till the boys escaped.

On the following week we went out to the boathouse again. As we went up to the door we saw a sign on it. Thus it read:

"Do not enter this place again," and was embellished with a rudely-drawn skull and cross-bones.

But Frank pulled it off and we went in. We were there a short time when we started to get something to eat, but we had no wood to make a fire with, so the other three boys went to get some wood and were gone quite a while. While they were away I heard a noise outside, and pretty soon I saw fire running up one side and up the front of the house.

I tried to get out, but failed. One of the boys happened to look up, and saw smoke, thought it strange, ran back to the boathouse and saw it in flames.

Frank sank an ax into the back of the house and ran in and found me on the floor.

I was overcome from smoke, but soon came to. We went home and heard that Mike Bogan had been killed jumping a freight on his way home from destroying the boathouse. The others were caught and locked up. Frank Kinney, Robert Ellis and Harry Johnson have gone to study to become draughtsmen, and I have a cigar store.

An Adventure With the Bears.

(By Tommy Gaine, Me.)

In the winter of 1900 I visited my uncle up in Maine. When I got there I saw my cousin, a boy of fourteen, who knows much about trapping and hunting.

One nice morning he asked me if I would like to go hunting with him. I said "yes."

We started at nine o'clock in the morning. Frank was a good traveler, and so was I. Frank had loaned me his repeating rifle and my uncle had loaned me a knife, while Frank had a revolver and a knife in his belt.

We had walked fast. We had already walked six miles, for it was noon. We rested to eat our cold meat, then in an hour we started for our long run. In the afternoon, near four o'clock, after having killed many birds on our way, Frank said to me that we would have to find a camping-place, for it was becoming dark.

In half an hour we reached a small stream.

We made a cabin, and built a fire for the night, after having ate our supper, Frank and I were not sleeping, but resting in our blankets, hearing the sound of the wind and wolves. At five o'clock in the morning we were walking over a trail. Having walked two miles, we came to a halt, while in front of us stood a black bear. Quick as a flash I had my rifle on my shoulder, while Frank stood aiming his revolver.

Three shots from my gun and a shot from Frank in the brain finished the bear, but we had more to deal with, for up the hill came three little ones with their mother.

Quick as a trigger we got into an ambush while we saw them coming.

Bang! bang! bang!

And there was a shot in the brain of each one.

Then we returned back home.

Presence of Mind.

(By Glenn Parish, Indiana.)

One day in the summer of 1901 I went on the wagon with the grocery boy and on the way around we had to cross the L. E. and W. tracks and as we were crossing them the line broke and the horse stood still and all the time a passenger train kept getting closer and closer, and it seemed to go sixty miles an hour.

I did not lose my presence of mind, so I jumped out on the horse's back, and drove my heels into his flanks and he started just as the train whizzed back of us and when we got home there were marks on the wagon where the train had shaved it. Wasn't that a close shave?

I wouldn't go through it again for \$100.

The Visit to Bear's Den.

(By John Harrington, Massachusetts.)

Bear's Den is a cave on the side of the mountain in a small town in Massachusetts.

There were five of us boys. We decided to explore the cave. We set out on the first day of April. We reached there at noon, starting at six o'clock in the morning. We went in the cave, for we only could go in a short distance.

There was a hole leading down further in the cave. I tied a rope around me and crawled into the hole. When I got in the hole about ten feet I could hardly breathe.

I had a lantern, for it was pitch dark in the cave. I went in a little further and down I went and splash in a pool of water. My arm pained awful, and my face was bleeding. I pulled the rope with my left arm. It started to pull. I then fainted. When I revived I was in bed with a broken arm and other injuries. I was not out of bed for three weeks after that.

A Lucky Crowd.

(By Ed. Ebmer, Minn.)

The city of Duluth is very hilly, and in the winter months it is a great place for coasting. Well, this was in 1897, five years ago. There were ten of us boys all about

ten or twelve years old coasting on a bob about sixteen feet long down a hill about a mile long, and when we had gone about half the distance the bob would be going at a great rate of speed.

We had gone half the distance, one day, when we saw a single horse grocery sleigh crossing the avenue. We were going so fast and were so close to the horse that it was impossible to turn on either side of it or stop, so taking the only chance we had, I, who was steering at the time, steered the bob right under the horse's stomach, between its fore and hind legs. We just got under when the horse gave a great bound forward and not realizing that he was out of danger ran about a half a mile before he stopped.

We boys were all frightened, but very lucky, for if we had struck the sleigh or the horse, some of us would certainly have been hurt. Bystanders who saw this said that it was the most thrilling thing they ever witnessed.

In the Baltimore Fire.

(By Fred Rose, Va.)

One day in January a year ago I went to a silk factory in Baltimore to see about a job. I was waiting in the office for the boss when I heard a noise and when I looked around I saw that the place was on fire.

I started for the stairway, but it was in a mass of flames. I then ran to the back window, but that also was in flames.

My heart was in my mouth, for I had given up all hope of being saved, for my eyes were filled with smoke. The floor was so hot that it burned my feet through my shoes.

All at once something bounded through the smoke toward me and picked me up and carried me through the flames to the window and carried me down the ladder to the street, where some kind people took me home.

Oh! how I rejoice to think how I was saved.

Shooting the Wolves.

(By C. S. Hailey, New York.)

Just three years ago the fourteenth night of this month I, in company with another boy—Archie Clark—went fishing. (We were working up in Vermont during the summer). After catching several fish apiece it was then about 9:30 p. m. We were startled by a cry, something like a screech owl; then more cries all around us. We were in a boat on a large pond surrounded by thick, wooded hills.

Then we saw one dark object after another come toward us, and to our horror we discovered they were wolves. Suddenly my line gave a quick, sharp jerk so quick as to cause me to drop pole, line, fish and all, at which Archie took up both oars and started for the shore as fast as he could row.

A great thought came to me. I reached to my hip pocket, drew my revolver, took good aim and fired twice. The result was that we heard a loud "yip-yah-oo-ouah," and then silence. Then we went to where Archie worked, and I stayed there all night and got home at just 4:30 a. m.

 \$1 worth of Tricks & Make-ups, sent postpaid for 25 cent stamps or silver. A nice Moustache or full Beard, Irish or Side Whiskers, any color, bottle Spirit Gum to stick them on. Box of Burnt Cork to blacken up. Im. Rubber Mouth, big teeth, secret & apparatus for performing the great remaining half-dollar trick. This big offer is to get your address to send you large lile. cat's got plays, wise tricks & agit. latest novelties. Mention paper you saw this in and I will also put in a Heavy GOLD photo finger Ring FREE, send size. Address Chas. Marshall, Mfr., Lockport, N.Y.

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This new Prize Anecdote Contest is on the lines of the one which has just closed—one of the most successful contests ever inaugurated. Every boy in the country has had some **THRILLING ADVENTURES**. You have had one yourself—perhaps you were held up by robbers, or were nearly run over by a train; perhaps it was a close shave in a burning building, in scaling a precipice, in bear-hunting, or swimming; whatever it was, **WRITE IT UP**. Do it in less than 500 words, and mail it to us with the accompanying coupon.

All entries must be in before September 1. The contest closes on that date.

The Prizes Will Be Awarded to the Seven Boys Sending in the Best Stories.

Look on the back cover of No. 52 for photograph and description of one of the prizes.

To Become a Contestant for These Prizes cut out the Anecdote Contest Coupon printed herewith, fill it out properly, and send it to **BUFFALO BILL WEEKLY**, care of Street & Smith, 233 William Street, New York City, together with your anecdote. No anecdote will be considered that does not have this coupon accompanying it.

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- 31—Buffalo Bill's Peril; or, Going It Alone in Dead Man's Gulch.
- 32—Buffalo Bill in Massacre Valley; or, The Search for the Missing Ranger.
- 33—Buffalo Bill in the Hidden Retreat; or, The Captives of Old Bear Claws.
- 34—Buffalo Bill's Disappearance; or, The Stranger Guide of the Rio Grande.
- 35—Buffalo Bill's Mission; or, The Haunt of the Lone Medicine Man.
- 36—Buffalo Bill and the Woman in Black; or, In League with the Toll-Takers.
- 37—Buffalo Bill and the Haunted Ranch; or, The Disappearance of the Ranchman's Daughter.
- 38—Buffalo Bill and the Danite Kidnapers; or, The Green River Massacre.
- 39—Buffalo Bill's Duel; or, Among the Mexican Miners.
- 40—Buffalo Bill and the Prairie Wolves; or, Hunting the Bandits of Boneyard Gulch.
- 41—Buffalo Bill at Painted Rock; or, After the Human Buzzards.
- 42—Buffalo Bill and the Boy Trailer; or, After Kidnappers in Kansas.
- 43—Buffalo Bill in Zigzag Canyon; or, Fighting Red Hugh's Band.
- 44—Buffalo Bill's Red Allies; or, Hand to Hand with the Devil Gang.
- 45—Buffalo Bill in the Bad Lands; or, Trailing the Veiled Squaw.
- 46—Buffalo Bill's Trail of the Ghost Dancers; or, The Sioux Chief's Secret.
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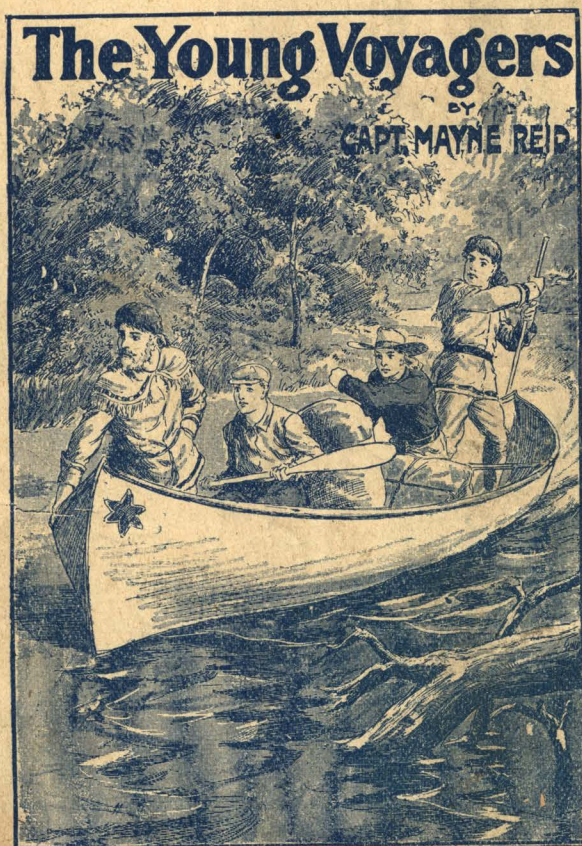
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